

Thursday January 22 1998

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Albania US\$ 2
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Indonesia Rp 10
Italy L 100
Japan ¥ 100
Korea ₩ 100
Kuwait KD 10
Latvia Ls\$ 10
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Malaysia M\$ 10
Malta M£ 10
Mauritius M\$ 10
Mexico M\$ 10
Morocco M\$ 10
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Spain P 10
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Taiwan NT\$ 10
Thailand B 10
Turkey TL 10
USA US\$ 10
Vietnam D 10

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

You think it's all over... it might not be

How to get a ticket for the World Cup

G2 with European weather

In The Company Of Men...

Is this the most misogynous film ever made?

Women, G2 pages 4-5

Microsoft in the dock

Silicon Valley lawyer speaks on his crusade

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Tapes said to reveal affair with White House aide Sex, lies and Clinton

President could face impeachment

Marlin Kettle in Washington

BILL Clinton stood accused last night of conducting an 18-month affair inside the White House with a 23-year-old staff member before pressuring her to lie under oath, leave her job and deny the liaison had ever happened.

The scandal, coming on the heels of a string of earlier reported sexual indiscretions by Mr Clinton, triggered talk of a possible impeachment over Watergate-style criminal allegations of obstruction of justice and incitement to perjury involving the president.

It emerged last night that a three-judge panel, meeting in camera and headed by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, authorised the White House independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr to expand his investigation.

The move came after secretly taped conversations allegedly indicated that Mr Clinton and his close friend Vernon Jordan encouraged Monica Lewinsky to commit perjury by lying to lawyers acting for Paula Jones in her sexual harassment case against the president.

The judges agreed to allow Mr Starr to examine possibly criminal allegations of encouraging perjury, making false statements and obstruction of justice involving the president.

Mr Clinton said he was outraged by the allegations and adamantly denied having any improper relationship with Miss Lewinsky, aged 23. She has also denied any affair.

A string of allegations concerning Mr Clinton's sexual behaviour had, until now, mostly centred on his activities while Arkansas governor.

The new claims relate to events as recent as 1996 and, unlike the Paula Jones case, involve the possibility of criminal activity by the president while in office.

There was no concealing the siege atmosphere at the White House yesterday as Washington buzzed with talk of impeachment for the first time since President Nixon's resignation in 1974. If the allegations are substantiated, Mr Clinton could face imprisonment for up to five years if prosecuted and convicted.

The new charges arise from up to 17 secretly recorded phone conversations — including one in recent days —

between former White House aide Linda Tripp and Miss Lewinsky. Miss Tripp was wired to record on behalf of Mr Starr. In the conversations Miss Lewinsky — despite her later sworn denial of an affair — is said to give graphic detail of a sexual relationship with Mr Clinton lasting a year and a half.

Even more damagingly, Miss Lewinsky is also reported to allege that Mr Clinton and Mr Jordan urged her to cover up the affair by denying it in evidence she would give to Ms Jones's legal team.

Miss Lewinsky gave a sworn affidavit to Ms Jones's lawyers on January 7 saying she had not had an affair with the president. She is scheduled to give oral testimony to them on Friday.

Miss Lewinsky worked as a volunteer intern at the White House between 1995 and April 1996, when she went to work at the Pentagon press office where she met Miss Tripp, a former White House aide. Miss Lewinsky is now about to start work in New York for a public relations agency to which she was introduced by Mr Jordan.

Mr Clinton's lawyer Bob Bennett was summoned for a meeting with the president yesterday morning. Asked about the alleged relationship on his way into the meeting, Mr Bennett said: "The president adamantly denies it and she under oath denies it. I smell a rat in all this."

President Clinton last night went on television to deny the allegation. "That is not true. That is not true. I did not ask anyone to tell anything other than the truth. There is no improper relationship."

Miss Lewinsky was said to be "devastated and very upset" by the controversy. It became clear yesterday that she had instructed new lawyers to represent her, having earlier instructed lawyers recommended by Mr Jordan.

Although the White House was making no allegations against her, Miss Tripp has repeatedly been a thorn in Mr Clinton's side. A Bush administration appointee, she remained in the White House until August 1994. She was the last person in the building to see the White House deputy counsel Vincent Foster before his death in July 1993.

She is also believed to be the source of allegations that Mr Clinton sexually harassed White House staff member Kathleen Willey in 1993.

White House scandal, page 6



Bill Clinton faces allegations that he and Vernon Jordan, below, pressured Monica Lewinsky, left, to lie under oath about an alleged affair. The claims arise from taped calls between her and former White House aide Linda Tripp, right



IRA warning on talks as Catholic is murdered

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

ANOTHER Catholic was shot dead in Belfast last night just as the IRA issued a warning that the peace process in Northern Ireland was on borrowed time. Its statement was received with disquiet in Downing Street and Dublin.

The latest murder, in a loyalist area, came after the IRA had passed its statement to the BBC. It was viewed as a veiled threat as the two governments draw up proposals for the all-important cross-border bodies to present to the talks participants next week. There were similarities to the IRA's position in the weeks leading up to the collapse of its first ceasefire in February 1996.

Hardline elements within the republican movement want Sinn Féin to quit the talks and the IRA to walk away from its second ceasefire. There is no immediate sign that either is about to do so, but the organisations' leadership value unity above all else.

It is under renewed pressure after publication of the British and Irish governments' "road map" towards a settlement and because of the current spate of sectarian killings.

The shooting last night of a Catholic, aged 55, from west Belfast, as he left his job in a car paint workshop in a loyalist area of the city, brings to four the toll of terrorist killings in as many days. Nine have died in six weeks, seven of them Catholics.

A lone gunman pumped five bullets into the victim as he walked to his car. He was hit five times in the chest and neck, and died minutes later at the Royal Victoria Hospital. The gunman escaped on foot, and again there was speculation that the Ulster Defence Association or its subsidiary, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, was involved. They are officially on ceasefire.

The IRA said that the document unveiled by the two governments last week was no basis for a lasting peace settlement. "It is a pro-Unionist document and has created a crisis in the peace process."

It accused the British government of playing the Orange card. The responsibility for undoing the damage visited with Britain, it said, was on the British government. There was no recognition of the Irish government's role in drawing up the paper.

The IRA said: "We have pointed out repeatedly in the past that meaningful inclusive negotiations are crucial to the resolution of the conflict."

"The British government have... continued with the remilitarisation policy of their predecessors in government."

"They have stalled on the implementation of any serious or meaningful confidence building measures."

Call for Maze chief to go, page 4

The funerals of the other two victims take place today. Taxi driver Larry Brennan, 52, a Catholic, was murdered hours after UDA commander Jim Guiney, 39, a Protestant, was gunned down. Both were killed in Belfast on Monday.

A Downing Street spokesman said: "The IRA statement further underlines the importance of the talks process."



Libel case Tories taste victory and defeat

Kamel Ahmed
Media Correspondent

ONE STALKED silently out of the side door, his lips sealed against inquiring questions. The other welcomed the media's interviews and declared himself well pleased with the outcome.

With the triumphal grin of success was Alan Clark, aged 68, Conservative MP for Kensington and Chelsea.

Both men had taken their

somewhat mixed reputations to the High Court in London and demanded that they be judged.

For Mr Clark, who took action against the Evening Standard over a series of spoof columns based on his diaries, there was vindication as Mr Justice Lightman ruled that the newspaper should withdraw the articles.

For Mr Allason, described as a "convincing little shit" in the *Have I Got News For You* diary, there was only failure as a jury dismissed his action for libel against the makers of the programme.

Drama One, Mr Clark vs Associated Newspapers, was played out in the morning in

Court 60, Drama Two, Mr Allason vs Hat Trick Productions, was played out in the afternoon in Court 14.

Mr Clark said that journalist Peter Bradshaw's spoof column had caused him "huge personal embarrassment" and that he had asked repeatedly for the editor of the Standard, Max Hastings, to desist.

When Mr Hastings refused, Mr Clark said the only action left to him was through the courts, which agreed yesterday the Standard was guilty of passing off the column, Alan Clark's Secret Political Diary, as Mr Clark's own.

"It was a fraud because people thought I had written

them and I think that nobody likes to have people attribute to them words which are written by somebody else, particularly over a very long period," Mr Clark said.

Mr Justice Lightman, given the decidedly esoteric task of pinpointing the difference between parody and rip-off, said that although Mr Clark was "highly unconventional" and that revelations about his private life were "startling" he was still a serious author with a reputation to defend.

He said the Standard's defence that people should have realised the columns were a spoof was insufficient. "Members of the public must be taken as they are found and

should not be assumed to know that there is a question of authorship," he said. "It is no defence that they would not be misled if they were more literate, careful, perspicacious, wary or prudent."

The judge criticised the Standard's legal team for digging into Mr Clark's private life during his cross examination. "The only consolation is that the plaintiff stood his ground and survived the onslaught unfazed and unbowled," he said.

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Supper? I'll let you know, dearie



Simon Hoggart

NOW and again, Guardian readers write to accuse me of being anti-Scottish. I am not. I love Scotland. I go there as often as possible, several times a year. I spent an idyllic honeymoon there (in fact, it was my only honeymoon). I even — and this is a sentence you very rarely read — enjoy Scottish food.

I just think they ought to be independent. For one thing we would be spared embarrassing remarks like that from Brian Donohoe (Lab, Cunningham), who began a perfectly routine question to the Prime Minister yesterday by saying that we were about to celebrate "the birth of the greatest poet in the land, Rabbie Burns".

A.E. Housman had it right about Burns. "If you can imagine a Scotch commercial traveller in a Scotch commercial hotel leaning on the bar and calling the barmaid 'Dearie', then you will know the keynote of Burns's verse."

Well said, Mr Donohoe went on to ask if the Prime Minister would arrange to attend a Burns night supper. To this, the correct answer is "Yes, provided I don't have to eat haggis or listen to any of that dreary dialect doggerel!" — and I speak as a lover of Scotland. Mr Blair was, however, as evasive here as he was on most other topics.

Earlier David Winnick, the MP for Walsall North, revealed that, since he had a question to the Prime Minister listed on the order paper, he had been invited by the Tory whips to a strategy meeting at 12.15 yesterday. "This is the session at which Tory backbenchers are instructed what to ask Mr Blair. Having received their orders they can cut along for lunch at the Savoy Grill, Wilton's, Little Chef, or wherever."

Mr Winnick felt unable to attend the meeting, since he is

a Labour MP (as I write, some wretched factotum is no doubt being fired for this mistake). He added that if the Leader of the Opposition really did want his advice, he would recommend that the Tories should return the £1 million given to them by a relative of a Hong Kong drug baron. (I had assumed that his nickname, "White Powder Man", was a reference to Teresa Gorman and her make-up.)

But the exchange was deeply depressing. Since almost every question asked by Tory MPs concerned Harriet Harman's "affluence test" and almost every question asked by Labour backbenchers was laced with tongue-lashing about the brilliance of the Government's policies, it's clear that the whole of Question Time is rigged, but rigged by two quite separate organisations.

It's as if the two sides had decided to play a game of chess, each following a strict plan, with no reference to the moves their opponents are making. Or as if Manchester United were to play soccer against Wasps, who were playing rugby. The result is not satisfying, entertaining or informative.

The Prime Minister cunningly began by saying that he had received a hoax phone call from a radio DJ who had managed to get past the Number 10 switchboard, pretending to be William Hague. (The text shows that Mr Blair saw straight through the impostor, mainly because he addressed him as "Tony". You thought that in New Labour's relaxed modern regime, people were supposed to call him Tony. You were wrong. It's "Prime Minister" to you. And to Mr Hague.)

The real Opposition Leader, with equal cunning, began his attack by asking with false innocence, "Have you had any hoax calls from a man claiming to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer, wanting a friendly chat?"

Desmond Swayne (C, New Forest W), the Cad of the Commons, also asked about the affluence test. "Who is affluent?" he demanded. From most Tories this would be a rhetorical question. From Mr Swayne, I fear it is an attempt to find the name of a few affluent widows, at whose side he will shortly appear with champagne and flowers.

Review

Singular lives and double meanings

Robert Clarke

Sluice Gates Of The Mind
Leeds City Art Gallery

RACE Pallthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff met at a party in 1935. Within weeks they were involved in a systematic attempt to get to the bottom of each other's minds. Pallthorpe, a 52-year-old pioneering psychoanalyst, and 29-year-old artist Mednikoff spent the rest of their lives in an experiment of mutual intimacy.

Both contumaciously wrote, painted and drew, painstakingly keeping records of every intuition, impulse and desire, no matter how socially taboo. Their aim was to get as close to each other as anyone has ever got by "using art as a short cut to the unconscious". They set up house, couch and studio and embarked on a sexual relationship. Pallthorpe took on the role of psychic mother, even going so far as to "adopt" her artistic offspring in 1948 when Mednikoff appears to have changed his name to Richard Pallthorpe. The painter obviously had it in mind to get back to some kind of artistic womb. God knows what these

two really got up to and what their neighbours thought. The joint biography is, tantalisingly, only partially told in the catalogue to this first substantial exhibition of their visual work.

In any case, their story might be historically fascinating, but what of their art as art?

Any claim by the pair to clinical scientific independence is clouded by their obvious allegiance to the Surrealist movement. Their early biomorphic doodles were carried out in the same spirit of psychic automatism as such contemporary Surrealist innovators as Masson and Miro.

Everything in creation tends, through a kind of double entendre, to take on the appearance of genitalia. The repressed or hidden is always assumed to be monstrous, so that Pallthorpe and Mednikoff often appear to be pulling on the grotesqueries to come up with Dr Who-type things, but with knobs on. Nevertheless, many of their early drawings still retain a real connection with a wild, well-observed, second childhood. And who could wish for much more from a partnership than that?



Rosaries are distributed in Havana's Plaza de la revolución yesterday. Catholics have been more open in their faith in the run up to the papal visit. PHOTOGRAPH: RODRIGO ARANGUA

Pope challenges embargo

John Paul II urges change in US sanctions as he arrives in Cuba

Phil Gannon in Havana

POPE John Paul II yesterday urged the United States to reconsider its 35-year economic embargo against Cuba.

Asked by reporters aboard his flight to the communist country if he had any message for the Americans regarding the embargo, the

Pope said in English: "To change, to change."

Widely credited with bringing down communism in his native Poland, he also called for the Cuban leadership to make progress on human rights. "Human rights are fundamental rights, and the foundation of all civilisation for regulating social communication. I brought this conviction with me from Poland in confrontation with ... a

communist, totalitarian system. He also said the late Marxist guerrilla Che Guevara would be judged by God. "He will face the tribunal of God ... I am certain that he wanted to serve the poor."

President Fidel Castro headed the welcome ceremony when the Pope touched down. Too frail to bend and kiss it, as was his custom, the 77-year-old pontiff was presented with a bowl of Cuban soil to press to his lips.

"This will be his [Castro's] death sentence," said Juan Antonio Sánchez of the inde-

pendent news agency Cuba Press, reflecting a widespread belief that the papal visit could set in motion a train of events similar to those that led to the collapse of communism in eastern Europe.

But on the streets of Havana, where people have been looking forward to the visit, many take a different view.

"Communism will be around for years to come," said physiotherapist David Cifuentes, who although critical of President Castro, made a distinction between the government and the "system".

"I don't want this system to

end," he said. "Where else do you have free education, free healthcare and all the other benefits? If the system collapsed we would have chaos."

Critics point out that the system is already showing signs of collapse, or at least of modifications that amount to creeping capitalism. Mr Cifuentes (not his real name) earns the equivalent of \$9 a month as a doctor. To make ends meet, he also works illegally as a taxi driver.

Both the government and the Vatican insist the Pope's visit is pastoral, not political. Already there has been a sig-

nificant upsurge in open expressions of Catholicism, which until recently were heavily penalised.

The government's relaxation of restrictions on the church has led to "a tremendous explosion", Mr Sánchez said. "People were hungry for spiritual things."

President Castro is counting on the prestige of the visit to boost his domestic and international standing, especially regarding the US. The events of the next four days will be closely watched for clues as to whether the declared atheist is playing with fire.

Blair spots Hague hoaxer

Luke Harding

WHEN disc jockey Steve Penk woke up yesterday morning, he was struck by a jocular thought. Why not ring up Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street and pretend to be William Hague?

True, the chances of success appeared slim. But his previous stunts (which included phoning a carpet shop as William Hague, and demanding a "rug for my head") had all come off.

Ensnared early yesterday in the Piccadilly offices of London's Capital Radio, where he has a morning show, Mr Penk phoned directory inquiries. He was given the number of the Cabinet Office, and it helpfully transferred him to 10 Downing Street.

It was thus, at 8.30am, that one of the more surreal hoaxes of recent parliamentary times began. A somnolent Downing Street failed to realise that Mr Penk was an impostor, who he announced: "It's William here, can I speak to Tony?"

An elderly female switchboard operative had her suspicions. "His wife's just getting him from out of this

room. Who did you say was calling?" she inquired.

"Ague, William Ague," he said.

Exquisitely, her complaint that the Prime Minister's office was plagued with impostors and cranks was met

with a perfectly-weighted job. "Oh well, I can well imagine. We get quite a few of the same at our office."

Operator: You're better now ... You sound normal, hold on.

Hague: Um, hello Tony. It's William Ague.

Blair: Yeah.

Hague: Just thought I'd phone up for a chat, say hello, see how you're getting on,

that sort of thing.

Blair (laughs): It's quite a good imitation.

Hague: Well ... just thought I'd find out how you're keeping. Is everything OK?

Blair: I'm just trying to work out who it is really ... You must have taken them in very well on the switchboard.

Hague: I was talking to John Prescott and he said you wanted that Cher exercise video ... and we went to the car boot sale, me and Phil, and so perhaps I can let you have it in the Commons.

Blair: I think it would be very helpful. Just hand it over at Prime Minister's Question Time — it will be a better exchange than usual.

Back home in Walton on Thames, Surrey, Mr Penk was reflecting on his day's work. He was, it emerged, a Labour voter. What did he make of Tony Blair? "He comes across as a great guy."

should take note that the Leader of the Opposition always addresses the Prime Minister as, well, Prime Minister — and not Tony — when he phones up to say hello.

The game was up long before Mr Penk told the Prime Minister he had bought him the latest Cher exercise video following a chat with John Prescott.

Mr Blair later twisted the stunt to political advantage at Prime Minister's Questions. He told a real Mr Hague he had had a better exchange earlier with a mere hoaxer than with him.

The loquacious Alastair Campbell, the PM's press secretary, was later seen in the lobbies ramming the message home: Tony Blair was not just a man who makes tough choices; he was also a good sport.

Capital Radio, meanwhile, was unapologetic. The station played a tape of the exchange to its 3.5 million listeners at 11.30am. "We are not sorry for going to the highest echelons of state to play a joke," a spokeswoman said.

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Pay squeeze for public sector

Michael White and Seamus Milne

GORDON Brown is poised to squeeze this year's pay settlement for over a million doctors, nurses, teachers and other public sector workers as part of his drive to keep the Blair government within Tory-inherited spending limits.

In keeping with his "Iron Chancellor" stance, Mr Brown is expected to follow Kenneth Clarke's established precedent — despite post-election hopes of Labour-supporting trade unions — and save cash by phasing pay awards in two stages, one at the beginning of April and the second in October.

But to the relief of public service unions — who have been concerned he might not apply the awards to the 40 per cent of NHS workers not covered by the review bodies — he is also planning to even out increases between competing groups.

The annual reports of the public sector pay review bodies, which the cabinet is expected to receive next week, are understood to have recommended settlements just above the headline rate of inflation, currently 3.7 per cent — although problems of "recruitment and retention" growing throughout the public services, are said to have produced higher recommended figures for the armed forces.

Treasury sources deny reports that the review body groups will all get 2.5 per cent from April 1, with a top-up to the recommended figure in the autumn. That was Mr Clarke's policy. In keeping with Mr Brown's non-election line, the policy is likely to be one of equal sharing, underpinned by requirements to

demonstrate efficiency and productivity gains.

The move comes as Mr Brown is again under fire for applying unnecessary downward pressure on public spending, given that tax revenues and economic growth are likely to be higher than Mr Clarke predicted.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies, a Liberal Democrat yesterday accused him of hoarding an election "war chest" to win in 2001/2 — not far off the Chancellor's declared strategy of avoiding the errors of past Labour governments which spent first and were later forced to cut back programmes ahead of the following election.

So long as Mr Brown ensures the pay review awards apply across the health service workforce — and that there are sweeteners in the form of greater job security — the unions are likely to stomach the staging of the increases. The Government has powerful leverage over the trade unions in the form of its planned legislation on the right to union recognition where more than half a workforce wants it.

Unions lobbying over the crucial details of the forthcoming white paper on union recognition are anxious — among other things — to ensure that workplace ballots will hinge on the percentages of those who vote, rather than of those eligible to vote, as the CBI wants.

Mr Brown sympathises with their aim, although some other ministers do not. That potential carrot is less important for an entirely public sector union such as Unison, which has few recognition problems. But it is vital for the wider trade union movement.

Continued on page 12

Tories win and lose in libel cases

continued from page 1

said that it was bloody but unbowed and would still run the column under a different, less confusing, guise, it was time to dig deep for the £250,000 legal costs.

"My own big disappointment is that a great public entertainer like himself should ever have wanted to bring this to court," Mr Hastings said. "I'm still fond of

the old monster but even if he buries us in lawyers the only thing I couldn't bring myself to do is take him seriously, any more than Peter Bradshaw does."

For Mr Allison, the High Court bout was on the other foot. He left the only comment from the Allason camp to his friend, Jane Burgess, who ushered his mother away from the cameras.

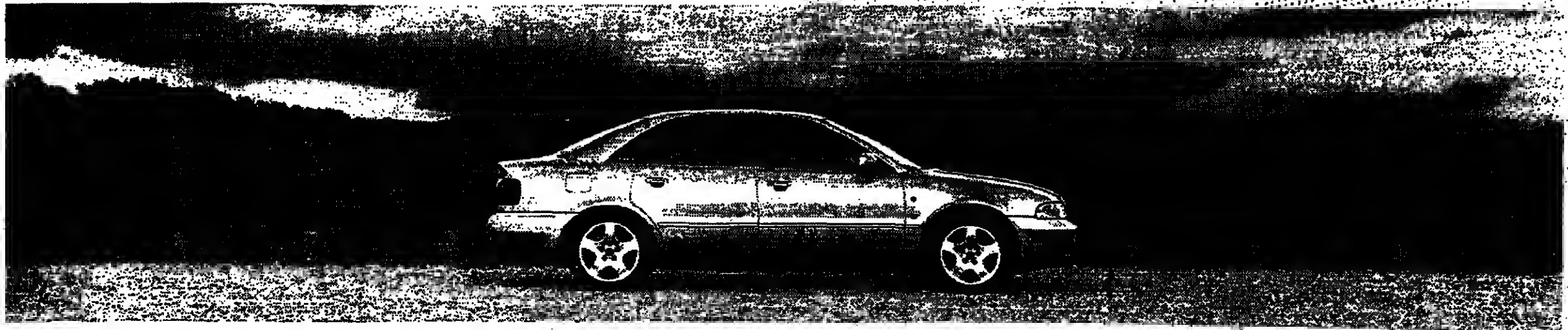
"If that is justice, I would like to know what the definition of justice is," she said, retreating into the cold aftermath of a humorous comment.

A Hat Trick Productions spokesman said: "It is very important both for Have I Got News For You and for other programmes of this type that public figures are open to robust comment and vigorous lampooning."

"It is a healthy and welcome sign that the jury decisively rejected a politician's attempt to secure large damages for a humorous comment."

As a final riposte, the legal team for Hat Trick Productions revealed how much they had deposited in court as possible future payment for damages to Mr Allison's reputation. Precisely £50.

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Row over Britain's oldest mother

Trick by woman, 60, brings calls for fertility curbs

Rory Carroll

WOMEN seeking fertility treatment may face tighter controls after a 60-year-old tricked doctors into making her Britain's oldest mother.

Prospective mothers may have to supply birth certificates in the wake of Elizabeth Buttle, who allegedly received treatment worth £10,000 after pretending to be 49 and single.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which licenses fertility clinics, will consider tightening its code of practice if Mrs Buttle is shown to have lied to doctors at the London Gynaecology and Fertility Centre.

The code does not include specific checks on ages of patients, who can undermine checks by forbidding the clinic to contact their GP.

Susan Bates, clinical director at the Harley Street-based centre, said client confidentiality rules prevented her confirming whether Mrs Buttle was treated there.

She said: "Certainly we will be reviewing the whole process in the clinic, but I think that will be the case for all clinics around the country."

"At the moment, we don't ask patients for birth certificates and we have no way of corroborating what they tell us. There are very strict rules over patient confidentiality. We cannot contact a patient's GP about fertility treatment unless the patient gives specific consent."

No one called Elizabeth Buttle was treated at the clinic, but staff were reported as identifying Mrs Buttle as a woman who checked in as Tracy Ann Williams.

Born eight weeks ago, Mrs Buttle's son Joseph was hailed as a miracle baby after she claimed he was conceived naturally with her then partner, Peter Rawstron.

Yesterday she was reported to be hiding from the media pack which descended on the village of Lampeter, Dyfed, in the company of reporters from the News of the World, which bought her story for a reported £100,000.

Ann Widdicombe, a former Conservative minister, led calls from family pressure groups to tighten rules on the "laxities" in fertilisation treatment.

"We have got totally hung up on a woman's right to have a child without regard to age, circumstances or anything else, and without considering the welfare of the child," she said.

But her reaction was condemned as "opportunistic nonsense" by Lord Robert Winston, a gynaecologist who pioneered research in human reproduction.

He said: "This case is unique and to focus on it like this is totally bizarre. This isolated mistake doesn't make much of a difference. The fact is that it is very difficult to do anything if people lie. A doctor's consulting room isn't a court of law and nor should it be. We have to take things on good faith. To try to make law out of a hard case goes against all general policy."

Mrs Buttle apparently fooled her family and partner, saying her visit to a clinic was for a throat operation. She went on TV to dismiss doubts among villagers in Lampeter.

She said: "I had a perfectly natural birth. I have never taken fertility drugs or hormone replacement therapy. It is just malicious gossip. It was a physical relationship and that was that. We never used precautions because I thought I'd gone through the menopause."

She looks after 14 cattle, 30 Shetland sheep and other livestock on her 97-acre farm, 1,000 ft up a remote hillside. It has no running water and an outside toilet.

Yesterday the farm was locked and deserted and reporters tried to track down relatives.

The National Office of Statistics said Mrs Buttle could face prosecution for perjury if she misled Mr Rawstron into signing his name on her son's birth certificate as the natural father.

Mr Rawstron, aged 58, who runs an agricultural fodder business, has returned to his wife of 30 years, apparently after falling out with Mrs Buttle over her deal with the News of the World.

One neighbour said Mrs Buttle had the baby to cement the two-year relationship. Mr Rawstron responded to questions yesterday by holding up a crumpled piece of paper bearing the word No.

Villagers gave a mixed reaction to the news that Mrs Buttle had had fertility treatment. "I thought all along it was an accident, that it was God's will. Now I'm beginning to wonder why she wanted a child at her age. She may not live long enough to see him through his formative years," said Hazel Thomas.

Alan Jones, aged 74, said: "The police are stopping anyone going down the lane. There's press everywhere."

"I didn't expect anything like this at all. Liz doesn't look 60."

Tony Newman, landlord of the Tafari Inn, the village pub at Cwmaman, east Mrs Buttle's home, said locals were learning to be more cagey.

"It's all about cheque book journalism now. No one's going to talk unless they see one."



Elizabeth Buttle with her son Joseph, to whom she gave birth, aged 60, eight weeks ago

PHOTOGRAPH: NEWS OF THE WORLD

Single mum, aged 49, seeks baby

Sarah Hall

ELIZABETH Buttle's case has exposed an industry in which there are few hard and fast rules.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which licenses all 76 clinics offering IVF treatment in Britain, places no upper age limit on women seeking treatment and does not insist they have a partner.

GP referral is unnecessary, although the clinic must contact the doctor. Independent, voluntary counselling must be offered at the consultation stage.

I rang 14 fertility clinics purporting to be a 49-year-old divorcee with no partner. I had a 10-year-old daughter, regular periods and a strong desire for a second child. The majority were keen to book me a consultation, with only four turning me down outright on account of my single status, and two because of my age.

Midland Fertility Services: A spokeswoman said: "There is no age limit for treatment — it just gets a little bit complicated as you get older — and we do treat single people here, so that needn't be a problem. We can't treat you without a referral letter from your GP or your gynaecologist, and we'd need to contact him, as well as discuss how you'd cope with raising a child on your own. The initial consultation's £65, and the IVF treatment's up to £3,000 a cycle. Buying in donor sperm is an extra £50 and drugs can be up to £1,000."

London Gynaecology and Fertility Centre (where Mrs Buttle was treated): "We do treat single ladies but you'd have to go to our clinical ethics meeting and see two consultants — because you're single and because you're over 45. You don't need a medical referral letter from your doctor, although obviously any background history is helpful. We treat ladies up to the age of 55. Initial consultation's £120, IVF £2,500 with drugs up to £1,000."

Esperance Hospital Assisted Conception Unit, Eastbourne: "Within reason we treat anybody. We don't actually have a maximum age; we treat people as long as they haven't gone through the menopause. We do have patients who are single so that wouldn't automatically stand against you, but we might recommend you see our counsellor, although that's voluntary. You really need to be referred by your doctor."

Consultation £100; treatment £2,000; plus sperm and drugs.

London Women's Clinic: "We only accept patients up to the age of 50, but your being single isn't a problem — although, obviously, you'd have to have very close counselling to discuss the welfare of your child. We normally only accept single women under 45 but we do take every individual case on its own merits. A referral letter from your GP's needed, but the chances of your getting pregnant are very small."

Consultation £140; IVF £2,000; drugs up to £1,000; sperm £135.

Medicine's street of stars — and self-appointed experts

HARLEY STREET W1
CITY OF WESTMINSTER

It is address for doctors to have, but there are no formal controls over who can practice there

Christopher Elliott on Harley Street

THERE are no screaming sirens, no trolleys thundering across the pavements. Only the discreet polished brass plates and separate bells marked "patients" tell the casual onlooker he is in Harley Street, where the rich come from around the world with medical troubles.

The mile-long street fronted by elegant late Georgian, facades in central London is still seen as the address, in Britain, from which to dispense private medicine. Hundreds of doctors and specialists do so, using the grandest of consultant suites to rooms not much bigger than a broom cupboard for half-hour consultations which might cost between £75 and £400.

The name is so important it trickles round the corners. Thus the London Gynaecology

and Fertility Centre, where Mrs Buttle had IVF treatment, has its entrance in Devonshire Road, but its official address is 112a Harley Street.

"It is just a geographical address and the level of quality is variable," said Professor Harry Keen, a member of the executive committee of the NHS Consultants Association and a specialist in diabetes at Guy's Hospital.

"It is pretty unregulated. Anyone with money can put a plate up there. Some of the stars practise there but there is no question that others are self-appointed experts."

Traditionally many consultants at London teaching hospitals top up their NHS earnings — £20,000 a year on average — by seeing private patients in Harley Street.

Harley Street has catered

for a series of niche markets. In the past cosmetic surgery was a big attraction for patients, now there are five different fertility clinics.

Dickinson Cowan, medical director of the Portland Hospital fertility unit, said all fertility treatments at Harley Street were private.

"There are five IVF units in Harley Street all with hugely different views on the age of egg recipients. Some doctors are very conservative and won't treat older women. It's a difference in sympathy and understanding."

The lack of regulation over who practises there concerns the Patients Association, which last year received 20 complaints from people over treatment by Harley Street based doctors or specialists.

"The NHS provides a high

set of standards, but in Harley Street who monitors them?" said Stephanie Ellis, association secretary. "We have had complaints from people which appear to show that junior doctors know next to nothing about anatomy."

In the past five years the General Medical Council has struck off a number of doctors whose registered address was Harley Street.

□ In November 1993 Parooque Siddique was struck off for carrying out a female circumcision.

□ In November 1994 Andrew Winiewicz was struck off for supplying a false medical certificate for money.

□ In July 1995 Nicholas Sidle was struck off for "a catalogue of failures" relating to the care of seven patients treated by keyhole surgery.



The elegant Georgian facades of Harley Street, still trading on its world-wide reputation PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

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Survey of 1,000 parents and pupils reveals boys are less likely than girls to seek help once regular verbal and physical abuse begins

Children expect bullying at school

Vivek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

CHILDREN expect bullying to be a regular feature of school life with eight out of 10 having suffered at least one sustained attack, according to a national survey on bullying.

The survey found that boys are less likely to seek help over bullying than girls and that on average, a child can expect their first bullying experience at eight years old.

Around 1,000 children and parents took part in the survey commissioned by Family Circle magazine and presented yesterday to Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett.

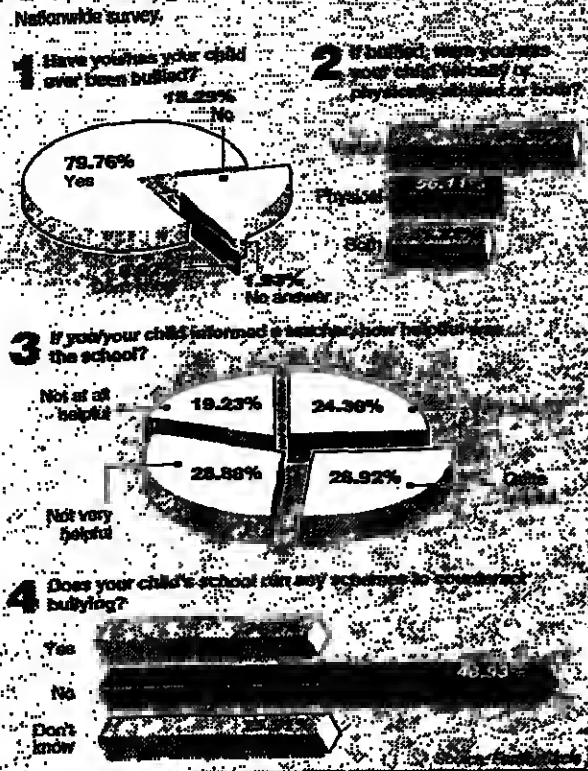
Just over 88 per cent of those who had been bullied said it happened at least twice a week with more than 51 per cent saying that they had suffered both physical and verbal abuse. Nearly all the children said bullying was part of their lives because either they or a close friend had been bullied.

No boy who took part in the survey had contacted a telephone bullying helpline, with one in three reporting feeling sick because they were being victimised.

Girls however, are more likely to miss school because of bullying, with 68 per cent saying that they played truant compared with 50 per cent of boys because of bullying.

Publication of the survey is timed to coincide with an

Schoolyard bullies



awareness campaign entitled: "Be a Buddy not a Bully" and includes distribution of anti-bullying posters to all schools.

Mr Blunkett said that a clampdown on bullying could help reduce truancy rates and improve academic standards.

"This is one of the most important things we can do, to give young people a chance in life and flourish."

"Bullying has a devastating impact on achievement and truancy levels. There's a long way to go to ensure that development plans and targets

for schools actually involve anti-bullying policies."

The survey also found that schools could do a lot more to clamp down on bullying.

Almost half of parents questioned said that the school was not very, or not at all, helpful. Almost 50 per cent of children said that their schools did not run any schemes to counter bullying.

Almost 80 per cent of children said that they informed parents when bullied but almost 10 per cent said that they do not tell anyone.

Nearly all those taking part in the survey were in agreement over the best way to tackle bullying. More than 50 per cent said schools should have stiffer punishments for bullies.

Sue James, editor-in-chief of Family Circle, said: "We would like to see every school in Britain putting bullying on the agenda. The message from the survey is clear and all of us have to unite to combat the horror of bullying."

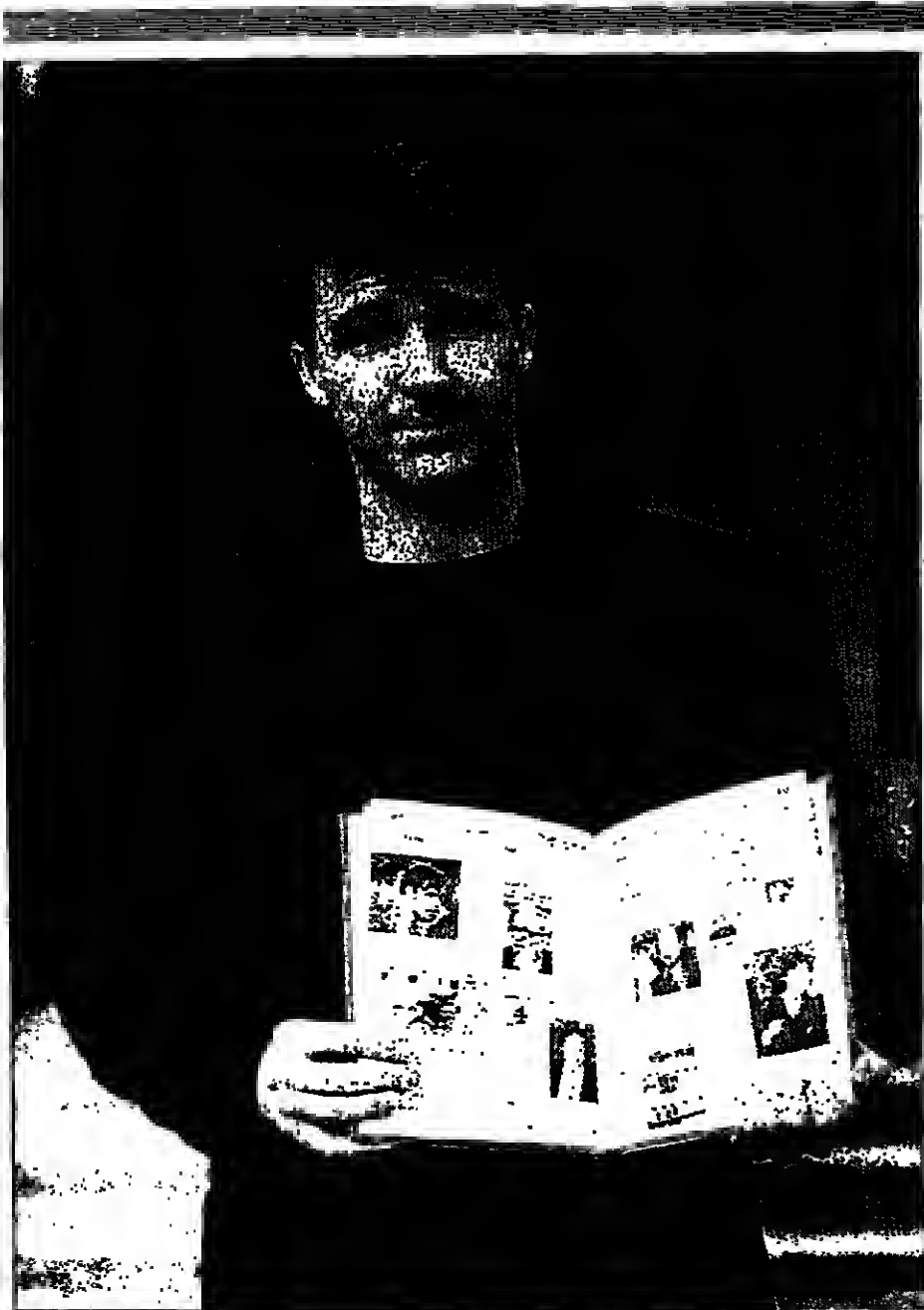
Mr Blunkett did warn children affected by bullying not to follow his example after explaining how he formed an "A team" to tackle a group of bullies at the school he attended.

He said: "Two or three of us engaged in something that I wouldn't recommend. I remember hitting this lad who had been bullying younger children for about two years. I ended up in hospital with a broken hand."

Mr Blunkett warned all victims of bullying: "You have to find a better way than that."



Bullying, says the survey, can spur children into truancy or leave them with feelings of inadequacy. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GIBSON



Colin Swash, who compiled the book, shows the disputed words. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES HORTON

Ex-Tory MP loses libel case against TV team

Kamal Ahmed
Media Correspondent

HE HAD started with head held high but the end was somewhat more ignominious.

Rupert Allason, the former Conservative MP, left the High Court in London without a word yesterday after the collapse of his libel case against the team who make Have I Got News For You. He faces a bill for legal costs estimated at up to £50,000.

Mr Allason claimed that a description of him as a "convincing little shit" in the programme's annual diary left him shocked and distressed.

With his mother as the lead witness, he sued Hat Trick Productions, makers of the hit comedy quiz, for damages over the diary entry which he described as a "vicious and reviling slur".

But after retiring for a little over three hours following the three-day case, the jury disagreed.

"It is very important both for Have I Got News For You and for other programmes of this type that public figures

are open to robust comment and vigorous lampooning," a spokesman for Hat Trick Productions said after the case.

"It is a healthy and welcome sign that the jury decisively rejected a politician's attempt to secure large damages for a humorous comment in a book based on a programme which is enjoyed by millions."

The diary entry, published in December 1996, was towards the back of book, in the space reserved for November 9, Mr Allason's birthday.

Alongside other pictures and references to Salman Rushdie and Robert Maxwell, the caption said of Mr Allason: "The maverick Tory MP, when he is writing spy novels, is called Nigel West, and when he is fighting against his own Government is called something quite unprintable."

"Indeed, given Mr Allason's fondness for pursuing libel actions, there are also excellent legal reasons for not referring to him as a convincing little shit."

The entry referred to Mr Allason's appearance on the programme when only the

first part of the entry had been said on air.

Colin Swash, who compiled the book, said there was no malice intended and that the language was "playground".

"There are some people who think that by sending a threatening legal letter they might get a cheque," Mr Swash said during the trial. Yesterday he confirmed his comment to "delighted".

During the case, which Mr Allason conducted himself, his mother, Nuala, aged 77, said that she had bought the book after a friend had told her about the entry.

"To see such dreadful language in print about my son, I was distressed for my grandchildren," she told the court.

In court, Mr Allason told the jury: "This is not a jolly joke. As you look through the book you will see there are rogues and scoundrels, Robert Maxwell included, but there is nothing that comes as close as this vile description."

Referring to his well-known taste for litigation, Mr Allason said: "Where I believe the media has been guilty of misconduct, I feel I have a responsibility to set it."

News in brief

Judges must give inside information

JUDGES will be told today to state how long criminals will spend behind bars when they pass sentence.

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, is issuing the direction to meet the Government's desire to end public confusion over sentencing practice, under which offenders are usually released long before the end of their nominal jail terms.

Judges must now explain in open court how long the offender will spend in custody, the period of supervision after release, and the period during which they can be recalled to jail.

They will also have to make it clear that any time already spent in custody on remand will count as time served.

For long-term prisoners, serving four years or more, and discretionary life sentence prisoners, judges explain how much time must be served before the Parole Board first considers a possible release. — *Clare Dyer*

Rape case boy 'unworried'

THE headmistress of a London primary school where a 10-year-old claims she was raped and indecently assaulted by classmates yesterday told an Old Bailey jury the boy had confidently told her about the incident when she interviewed him on the following day. Two boys have denied rape and indecent assault and two have denied indecent assault.

She said of the 10-year-old, boy now accused of rape and indecent assault: "He didn't show me that he was worried that he was in trouble. He was quite matter-of-fact — this is what happened. It wasn't until the end of the interview when he looked as if he was going to become a bit upset when I told him this was serious." The case continues.

'Pervert' advert criticised

ADVERTISING industry watchdogs have criticised a newspaper advert in which the founder of a multi-million-pound retailing business advocated the creation of homosexual "perverts".

The comments, which appeared as an editorial column in an advertisement for the Trago Mills supermarket company in Devon and Cornwall, have also been investigated by police following complaints of incitement to violence. Trago founder Mike Robertson used part of the advertising space as a soapbox for his views. — *Geoffrey Gibbs*

Exercising the brain

MODERATE exercise produces an "explosion" of blood capillaries in the brain that may help to keep a person young, scientists believe. New Scientist magazine reported that US research suggested exercise may protect against age-related decline. "One of the most commonly cited features of Alzheimer's is a decrease in cerebral blood flow," wrote Rodney Swain, one of the researchers. He speculated that mental work-outs may also spark the formation of blood vessels.

Second meningitis victim

A SECOND pupil from a school at the centre of a meningitis scare has died after contracting the disease. Kelly King, aged 16, a student at Notre Dame high school in Liverpool's Everton Valley, died two weeks after being admitted to hospital.

Ex-miners copy Coronation St with protest camp at mansion

Suzanne Millar

REDUNDANT Derbyshire miners have launched a round-the-clock "cat" protest at the Cambridgeshire mansion of a company executive after picking up the idea from Coronation Street on television last week.

The former pitman have invited the eco-campaigners, Swinney, and Greenham Common peace camp veterans, to join them outside the St Neots home of Alan Bowkett, chief executive of Berisford, parent company of Magnet Kitchens, which 18 months ago fired 300 workers for going on strike.

The sacked Magnet strikers,

backed by four unions, yesterday picketed Berisford's annual general meeting in London.

Last year Mr Bowkett was awarded a £124,000 annual salary increase, more than the £114,000 needed to meet the 3 per cent pay rise demand that triggered the August 1996 walkout at the Magnet factory in Darlington, County Durham.

But it was the example of the Coronation Street "cat" warriors camped on Councilor Alf Roberts's lawn in protest against a local building development that fired the imaginations of Terry Buckle and fellow ex-miners from the former Whitwell colliery.

Fear followed name calling

Vivek Chaudhary on the attacks that blighted a young girl's life

IT started with a bit of name calling but eventually progressed into a campaign that almost cost Rebecca Haworth her life.

"At playtime they would call me names but then they started doing other things like locking me in class or slamming doors in my face," said Rebecca, aged 16. "They blamed me for things I hadn't done and would laugh at me all the time."

Rebecca had been the victim of bullying for almost three years at her Doncaster primary school. But things deteriorated soon after her 10th birthday.

She said: "I didn't want to go to school any more and I just stopped eating because I felt so sad."

She spent the next four months in hospital being treated for anorexia and other problems related to her drastic loss of weight. Doctors said it had been brought on by the strain from bullying at school.

But the abuse not only affected the schoolgirl but her entire family.

Jane, Rebecca's mother said: "It put the whole family under a lot of strain. I felt as if I had failed as a parent. Rebecca just completely shut down, became

very shy and scared of people and it's taken her a long time to get out of it."

Now studying at a Yorkshire secondary school, Rebecca claims she still feels the effects of the bullying. "I still find it hard to mix with other children and sometimes worry that I might start getting picked on again. When you've been bullied then it stays with you for a long time."

Both Rebecca and her mother feel the school she attended could have done more to combat bullying. "The school didn't take it seriously," said Mrs Haworth. "I would like to see teachers and schools made accountable for bullying because at the moment it goes on unnoticed and ruins lives."

'Ghost' limbs live on in region of the human brain

Tim Radford
Science Editor

SCIENTISTS have found out how to probe the minds of people who can feel what is not there, by tuning in to the brain's experience of "phantom limbs" reported after amputation.

Even a pain in the neck is really just an experience in the brain, according to a report by University of Toronto researchers in the science journal Nature today.

Lord Nelson, who lost his right arm in a skirmish off Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1797, reported that his phantom experience was the proof, if proof were needed, of the existence of a soul. Surgeons in the American civil war also been aware of the warnings, and he asked if political considerations took precedence over security issues.

Mr Ingram again ruled out resignations over Wright's murder and the escape a fortnight before of IRA murderer Liam Averill. Two inquiries were under way, he said.

The INLA's assassination of

Call for 'naive' Maze chief to go

John Miffin
Ireland Correspondent

MICHAEL Mogg, governor of the Maze, yesterday faced renewed calls to resign after admitting he was naive in not fully separating republican and loyalist prisoners in the Belfast jail.

The Ulster Unionist Party MP Jeffrey Donaldson, demanded that he quit after he admitted he was told of a possible Irish National Liberation Army attack at the Maze on Loyalist Volunteer Force inmates months before the murder of LVP leader Billy Wright on December 27.

During an adjournment debate in the Commons, Mr Donaldson claimed security minister Adam Ingram had also been aware of the warnings, and he asked if political considerations took precedence over security issues.

Mr Ingram again ruled out resignations over Wright's murder and the escape a fortnight before of IRA murderer Liam Averill. Two inquiries were under way, he said.

The INLA's assassination of

Wright, 37, has been followed by six sectarian killings which have rendered the peace process increasingly fragile.

The INLA and LVP, both opposed to the ceasefire, each occupied two wings of H Block B, where officers had raised fears of attacks. No other H Block held both loyalist and republican inmates.

Mr Mogg told BBC Northern Ireland a current affairs TV programme, Spotlight, that he had spoken to Wright about the INLA threat. He had also addressed INLA prisoners about the possibility of an LVP attack. He said: "We got to the stage as far as the two groups were concerned that there was a sort of neutrality between them, and there would not be an attack."

But he accepted that, in retrospect, he had been naive to believe the peace.

Mr Donaldson told the Commons: "It is extraordinary that the governor takes assurances from prisoners and gives them greater credence than the warnings of his senior staff. His position is untenable, and... he has no alternative but to resign."

Life for man who killed after watching violent porn video

THE Government was urged last night to tighten restrictions on the availability of hard-core pornography after an ex-soldier was jailed for life after admitting murdering a woman in a re-enactment of a violent sex video he had just watched.

Stuart Hulise, aged 36, of Lowton, Greater Manchester, murdered Shirley Brown, aged 46, after breaking into her home, Manchester crown court was told.

Hulise, a private detective, saw the video — showing sexual perversion and abuse — at a party as couples paired off to different bedrooms. Alone, sexually aroused and frustrated, he felt impelled to murder. On his way home,

Hulise strangled Mrs Brown with her own tights after a violent sexual assault. Anthony Gee QC, prosecuting, said: "Some parts of the film show acts which bear similarity to what happened to Shirley Brown."

Roderick Carus QC, defending, said Hulise had become "inflamed" by the video.

Later, Ann Winter, Conservative MP for Congleton, called for urgent government action to curb the availability of hard-core porn films in the light of "this tragic case".

She said: "This case gives the lie to those who claim, with supposed authority, that violence on the media does not affect the behaviour of people who watch it."

Diana concert plan 'not mawkish'

Luke Harding

SIR Elton John, alas, cannot make it, neither can George Michael — but Sir Cliff Richard is likely to be there, with 15,000 Diana fans and some bemused deer. In what promises to be the year's most lachrymose event, a large concert is to be held at Althorp Park in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, the Spencer family announced yesterday. It will take place in the deer park of their Northamptonshire estate on Saturday, June 27 — four days before what would have been her 37th birthday.

The initiative from Earl Spencer follows widespread public disquiet over his plans to charge visitors £9.50 to see Diana's grave, on an island in the estate, from July. Shelley Anne Claircourt, the Althorp spokeswoman, yesterday said the earl decided to hold the concert four months ago. All profits would be donated to the Diana Memorial Fund, she said. But it was not clear last night whether the performers — to be announced next month — would give their services free. A commercial management group, IMG Arts and Entertainment, will be selling 15,000 tickets from February 27. They would be "accessible in price", said David Hartfield of IMG.

"All the stars are appearing at the invitation of Earl Spencer," Ms Claircourt added. Sir Elton, the most obvious candidate to front the show, is performing in Sweden that night and is unavailable, and George Michael, another of the princess's favourite artists, has "other commitments", a spokesman said last night. However, Sir Cliff is expected to appear. "We have had an invite and we have expressed an interest," his spokesman, Bill Latham, confirmed. Other possibilities include Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Chris de Burgh, both of whom sang before the princess. Ms Claircourt said the concert would be a mixture of classical, pop and rock, and would celebrate Diana's life.

She rejected the suggestion the concert was "mawkish", adding: "The main reason for this is to raise money for the memorial trust." She said the princess "loved music" and this was felt to be a "suitable event", and organisers had agreed a date as near to her birthday as possible.



Head turning... A visitor to the Art 98 contemporary art fair at the Business Design Centre in Islington, north London, contemplates 'The 12th and 13th' by sculptor Seyed M S Edalatpour. Open until Sunday, the fair is one of Britain's leading market places for contemporary art. PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL HACKETT

Two narrators cook up novel idea

Dan Glaister traces the birth of the latest publishing sensation

HOW to make a publishing sensation: take one part cult introspective Nick Hornby, mix with one part cult angst-ridden Bridget Jones. Place both in cult drama. This life setting, sprinkled with sex, and leave to stand. Added ingredient: two authors.

Arrow, the mass market imprint of Random House, has won the bidding war for the rights to the latest blurb to tickle the fancy of the publishing world. Come Together, lauded as the twenty-something answer to the hazy, gazing of the cult thirties, something writers who have dominated the bestseller lists and boosted the book trade.

But Come Together, which was bought by Random House as part of a two-book deal for £250,000, has a unique selling point. Eschewing the conven-

tional, it has two authors instead of one. The two authors, Esmyn Rees and Josie Lloyd, will write alternate chapters of the romantic comedy. Both will write in the first person, and about the same events. Johnny Geller, Rees's agent at the Curtis Brown agency, said: "It is the anecdotal story of two people — Jack and Amy — and how they come together. What makes it is the writing. It is two different voices having a conversation. The point is that it's normal people. This is what people in their 20s are thinking and saying. The device is simple and original."

The sale was also simple. The two literary agents involved sent out sample chapters by each of the writers. The next day a pre-emptive bid, designed to close the bidding before it had got under way, came in. Andy McKillop

at Arrow was determined not to let the book escape.

Rees, aged 26, who has already published a thriller, said: "We were just sitting in the pub one night and we got a little drunk and came up with this idea. We'd read all the Bridget Jones and Nick Hornby stuff and our complaint was that it would be good to have something for the twentysomethings rather than the thirtysomethings."

Josie Lloyd, aged 27, Rees's literary other half, who has also published one novel, said: "It's a very simple love story, although some of it will be close to home." She has given up her day job, as a temp and as a waitress.

The final ingredient is the promotion campaign. "The two of them are quite promotable," said Mr Geller. "They're both twentysomethings, and good-looking. The thing is whether they will get together." Expect the equivalent of the Gold Bland advertisement in the bookshops in time for Christmas.

A simple love story

Extracts from *Come Together*, by Josie Lloyd and Esmyn Rees

Amy: Boy, I'm in a feisty mood this morning. I am Tarzan, who needs to be wimpy Jane? I am POWER. WOMAN. I don't need men. Men and all their smelly genitals, disgusting toenails and hi-fi snobbery. Who needs them? Not me. No siree.

I stand on the doorstep and take an invigorating breath. Huh? No stupid man is going to get one over on me ever again. Today is the last day of the temp job and THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF MY LIFE. Best foot forward and all that. Unfortunately, I slip on the front steps and snag my lights. Jack:

I'd filled up with water from the bathroom tap. The ideal continued to hold true.

Proof of this lay in the fact that she didn't:

a) Squeeze my hand
b) Stare lingeringly into my eyes
c) Ask me how come I didn't get lonely not having a girlfriend
d) Go for the intimate route by sharing my cigarette like a spill

e) Suggest we get together again soon. Instead, she:

a) Kept her hands to herself.
b) Stared at the ceiling.
c) Told me that the best thing about sleeping around was that no two guys were ever the same.
d) Lit her own cigarette.
e) Told me that she was going to Australia travelling for three months. Then we stubbed out our separate cigarettes and I hit the lights and we slept.

Byers slips up on his times-table

John Garvel
Education Editor

STEPHEN Byers, the Education Minister who made his name by hammering under-performance in schools, was last night nursing bruised pride after getting his sums wrong in a broadcast to launch the Government's drive to improve numeracy.

The catch question came during an interview on BBC Radio 5 Live. Presenter Eleanor Oldroyd asked him: "What are seven times eight?" He answered: 54.

When Ms Oldroyd pointed out that the correct answer was 56, he said: "Well, there you go. It just shows my age. I had been using my times-tables all morning."

Mr Byers recovered gracefully at a subsequent press conference when journalists unsuccessfully attempted to trap David Blunkett, the Education Secretary. After a couple of seconds' hesitation, Mr Blunkett correctly calculated that nine eights are 72.

"As the Secretary of State said, I must do better. I will be spending 45 minutes tomorrow going through my times-tables," Mr Byers said.

It was the second entrapment of the school standards minister in three weeks. He

was also photographed in front of a blackboard on which the misgotten "under-achievement" appeared. But that mistake was understood to have been the work of a journalist.

A spokesman said Mr Blair considered Mr Byers "an excellent minister" and the miscalculation was "one of those character-forming events".

Mr Byers was announcing a programme to raise standards of numeracy in primary schools. Teachers will be retrained in new techniques of whole class teaching, emphasising mental arithmetic and banning calculators for children under eight.

The proposals came in a report from the Government's numeracy task force, headed by David Reynolds, professor of education at Newcastle university. "I get very exasperated about headlines saying we are going back to the basics," he said. "We aren't going back to anything. We want a blend of different approaches that will suit different schools."

The report recommends that teachers should "engage" each child through high quality questioning instead of allowing groups of children to proceed at their own pace with worksheets.

Analysis, page 11

Multi-cultural plea delays new Channel 4 blueprint

Chris Barrie

THE Independent Television Commission is struggling to draw up a new remit for Channel 4 following a two-pronged assault from ITV companies and entertainers who want changes to the way the broadcaster operates.

The ITC had been due to publish a fresh blueprint by last December but the new licence conditions will not appear for several weeks while it considers documents sent last month during its consultation exercise.

A campaign backed by comedians such as Lenny Henry, Michael Palin and novelist Ben Okri for more multi-cultural programming has been thought to have brought considerable pressure on the ITC board, which

meets today, will discuss Channel 4's future and try to finalise the licence conditions which will be sent to Channel 4's board for agreement.

The multi-cultural campaign, led by the Labour peer Baroness Amos, drew support from MPs and called for Channel 4 to commit a specific number of hours of peak programme time to multi-cultural programmes. Pressure for tighter regulation of Channel 4 is also coming from independent television companies. They want Channel 4 to be brought under much more rigorously defined targets for minority broadcasts.

In his Manifesto for Channel 4, Mr Okri called for more multi-cultural peak time programming. He said it would be a "force for good, for openness and for friendship amongst all the different people in Britain".

Why Britain expelled 105 Soviet agents

Secret papers released today show how MI5, fired up by defector Oleg Lyalin (right), persuaded the government to strike dramatically against the KGB. Richard Norton-Taylor gives details of Operation Foot.



Gerald Brooke with guards at his Moscow trial in 1965



Helen and Peter Kroger, Soviet spies awapped for Brooke

SECRET papers to be released today in an unprecedented display of openness reveal how MI5 and MI6 persuaded the government to expel 105 Soviet spies in 1971 — the most dramatic coup ever against the KGB.

The documents disclose that MI5 had been warning the Foreign Office for years about the growing number of Soviet intelligence officers active in Britain.

Their targets, according to MI5, included FO and Ministry of Defence officials, the armed forces, Concorde, nuclear energy, and computer projects. Sir Martin Furlival

James, then head of MI5, claimed there was also evidence of Soviet penetration of the Labour Party.

He told a meeting of top FO officials that it was "difficult to say exactly how much damage was being done" but that "at least 30 or 40 Soviet intelligence officers" in this country were actually running secret agents in government or in industry.

The documents note that "at least 120 Soviet intelligence officers in Britain, and the total could be as high as 200. This is more than the security services can contain," he said. He pointed out there were 517 accredited Soviet officials in Britain, more than

in any other western European country.

Ministers, and Mr Heath in particular, were concerned about Britain's vulnerability to repercussions — what Sir John Killick, the new ambassador in Moscow, considered "whether the KGB, for all their resources and efficiency, are out of their minds? I pose this question because I have the strong feeling that they must be extremely angry and frustrated that the Soviet government did not retaliate against us to anything like the extent they must have wanted."

He also questioned whether the Government's "detergent" operation should wash "whiter than white". Some known Soviet agents had not been expelled. There would be an advantage, he suggested, in having "a small number of known intelligence operators [in London] rather than people under such deep cover that we do not identify them".

Two years earlier, the Labour government agreed to

exchange the Krogers, Soviet spies sentenced in 1961 to 20 years in jail, for Gerald Brooke, a Briton arrested in Moscow in 1965 for distributing "anti-Soviet" propaganda.

The decision was reached on humanitarian grounds — Moscow threatened Brooke with harsher punishment — but not without argument.

James Callaghan, then Home Secretary, was against the deal. "I was opposed to it because I didn't think it was a fair exchange," he said yesterday. "Brooke was an innocent man. It was blackmail."

The release of the documents was described yesterday by Baroness Symons, a Foreign Office minister, as a "huge step" in the direction of more open government.

"We have not stood pat on the 30-year rule,"

Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, has tabled a bill to cut the 30-year rule — the delay in release of official papers — to 20 years.

The incentive for "ambulance-chasing" litigation has grown with the number of people using already crowded alpine resorts, and a very high rate of accidents and near misses. Ms Pilkington's research, the first project in its field, reveals that 64 per cent of respondents had been involved in incidents involving or only narrowly avoiding injury, more than half of them collisions between skiers.

Lack of understanding about correct practice on the slopes is also very worrying," said Ms Pilkington. "A third of skiers and snowboarders did not know about checking up and down the slope when starting or stopping; two-thirds did not know the rules about where to stop; and 41 per cent did not know who has priority."

This is really no different from car drivers venturing on the roads without checking at T-junctions, parking on blind bends and failing to know

Careless skiers face law suits

Martin Wainwright

SKIERS jetting off for the slopes are risking a danger much worse than broken bones, according to university research published today.

Lawyers rather than ice patches are an increasingly serious threat to "alarmingly ignorant holidaymakers" as a report from sports specialists at Leeds Metropolitan University warns.

Only 2 per cent of British skiers and snowboarders questioned at a sample of European resorts knew of the International Ski Federation (FIS) code of conduct, which underpins definitions of "reasonable behaviour" in criminal or civil compensation court cases. A further 61 per cent were unaware that any code governed holiday winter sports at all.

"This is the equivalent of over half of British car drivers being unaware of the existence of the Highway Code," said Angela Pilkington, a lecturer at the university's Carnegie National Sports Development Centre. "It leaves them alarmingly vulnerable to litigation if that spreads from the United States."

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Piste etiquette

A skier must ski in control, adapting speed and manner of skiing to personal ability.

The skier in front has priority.

A skier who overtakes is responsible for completing that manoeuvre in such a way as to cause no difficulty to the skier being overtaken.

A skier entering a marked run or starting again after stopping must look up and down the run to make sure he can do so without endangering himself or others.

Unless absolutely necessary, a skier must avoid stopping on the piste in narrow places or where visibility is restricted.

Every skier and witness must exchange names and addresses after an accident.

who has priority at a roundabout.

Concern was echoed at the Ski Club of Great Britain, although staff remain hopeful that non-litigious attitudes in Europe will survive. "The legal framework has been in place for some time, with the potential to sue," said a spokesman. "American-style ambulance chasing could get a foothold, and it did and there were big compensation payments, no doubt it would take off."

Ms Pilkington's report, backed by LMU's school of sports studies, calls for testing on the code to be added to learn-to-ski holidays, along the lines of Highway Code questioning in the driving test.

The report also calls for pass withdrawal and lift bans on skiers and snowboarders who infringe the code, and stricter policing of increasingly busy slopes.

"The traditional British attitude may have been: 'Oh well, it was an accident', but that is changing, just as litigation is growing in other sports."

Hard-up estate agent heir sells off his estate

THE chauffeur's son came to watch the end of the fairytale, a £1 million auction at Christie's yesterday of the coal scuttles and four-poster beds, hunting trophies and ancestral portraits, contents of the manor house he so improbably inherited seven years ago.

Charlie Gooch was born into a cottage in the stable yard of a 16th-century man-

sion, Boughton Monchelsea Place, near Maidstone in Kent. In 1981, aged 37, he became lord of the manor on the death of his godfather and patron, Michael Winch, a diplomat and suspected spy.

His father was Len Gooch, the bodyguard and chauffeur. At three weeks, the baby became the owner's godson and protégé.

Winch on long holidays across Europe, the little boy went too. Winch put him through public school, and he inherited a life interest, the responsibility for maintaining the house, but not the money to do so.

"It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to make. But I either had to commit myself and my family to the house full time, to de-

velop its corporate and leisure activities, or develop my professional career," he said. "The house was sold to a barrister just before Christmas for £2.2 million."

Almost all the lots sold, many for well over the estimates. The greatest excitement was over a pair of 19th-century gilt mirrors, which attracted fierce bidding, and went to a London dealer for

£284,000, over a top estimate of £120,000.

The suggestion that Winch was a spy — his postings included Warsaw and Moscow — has never been proved. Mr Gooch told how he gave his patron a copy of Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*. Winch retired to his library, and emerged snorting: "Non-sense, he wasn't senior enough for any of that stuff."

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All the president's women

Joanna Coles in New York

BILL and Hillary Clinton had always planned for the possibility of a scandal about a previous sexual indiscretion erupting during his tenure at the White House.

Appalled by the example of the former Democratic senator Gary Hart, who was forced to drop out of the presidential race in 1985 after his affair with Donna Rice was uncovered, Mr Clinton allegedly boasted to his aides that the crucial element in dealing with extramarital affairs becoming public was "sophistication".

With an almost mystical faith in the absence of photographs, he always said he would promptly acknowledge the marriage had suffered "difficulties". He would nod "bumbly at the weakness of the flesh", recalls an aide quoted in *The Politics of Sex* in Clinton's America by Roger Morris.

When the news broke in

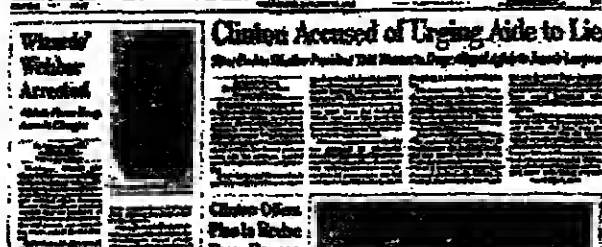
1992 of Mr Clinton's 12-year affair with Gennifer Flowers, the tactic appeared to work, staving off fears that he might have to drop out.

The Clintons appeared together on a talk show and, reaching for Hillary's hand, the president solemnly declared their marriage had hit a bad patch, as his wife smiled supportively.

Those outside Arkansas who were not yet familiar with his womanising reputation dismissed the affair as unimportant. Just as Mr Clinton had told his aides — the key thing was to dismiss any extramarital sex as "in the past".

Hillary's role was crucial. She would be required to stand behind him, seeming anything but the timid wife who had no choice but to stay. Last weekend she appeared on television to radio stations dismissing Paula Jones as "a woman with an agenda", and describing how she had spent Saturday sorting out the White House closets while her husband spent six hours

The Washington Post



Yesterday's Washington Post breaks the story

with Paula Jones and her lawyers.

Between them they would strike back at female accusers. According to one former staff member, the Clintons called it "taking on the bitches".

But they had not counted on having to deflect the impact of a group of Arkansas state troopers who would testify that the president had affairs with literally hundreds of women.

"The list of the future president's illicit affairs would be

remarkably detailed, including more than 20 women who stepped forward or were otherwise publicly identified by the spring of 1994," the *Toronto Sun* reported.

They identified the wife of a local judge, a Little Rock reporter, a former state employee, a cosmetics clerk at a Little Rock store and several others whom Mr Clinton allegedly saw two to three times a week during relationships lasting anywhere from weeks to months and, in Ms Flowers' case, years.

Then came the claims from the women. Bobby Ann Williams, a Little Rock prostitute, claimed Mr Clinton regularly picked her up during his jogging sessions and that she later gave birth to his child.

She was followed by a lawyer called Polly Kyle, who claimed that she and Mr Clinton had been lovers since they were at school in Hot Springs.

Next came Sally Perdue, a former beauty queen, Connie Hamry, a former secretary, and a divorcee, Jo Jenkins, who said she was harassed by calls from the then governor's office. Phone records later showed he called her 11 times on one day and 19 times in two years. There was no explanation for the calls.

When Paula Jones made her accusations in May 1994, it was clear that her lawyers were looking for other women who might have suffered Mr Clinton's attentions to show that he had a pattern of harassing women.

In January 1997 it emerged that Kathleen Willey, a for-

mer volunteer in the White House social office, might have been sexually harassed, although she has since denied it. Hers is certainly the most bizarre case.

In January 1997 Paula Jones's lawyer, Joseph Cammarata, claims he had an anonymous call from a woman claiming she had been harassed in 1993. She gave sufficient detail for Mr Cammarata to suspect Ms Willey, whose husband had recently committed suicide. Against her wishes, he subpoenaed her to question her about the matter further.

Ms Willey later denied making the call, but two of her friends spoke to the press. Linda Tripp told *Newsweek* magazine she bumped into Ms Willey leaving the president's office looking dishevelled. Julie Steele initially told the magazine that Ms Willey had told her she had been fondled by Mr Clinton, but she then changed her story, claiming Ms Willey had asked her to lie to give credibility to the allegation that she had been harassed.

News in brief

Cook confident in Hong Kong

THE Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, yesterday praised Hong Kong for its good start as part of China and for weathering Asia's financial crisis, but he was critical of the limits on democracy in the former British colony.

Mr Cook wrapped up the highest-level British ministerial visit to Hong Kong since the July 1997 handover on a positive note. "We have confidence in Hong Kong," he said after talks with Hong Kong's leader, Tung Chee-ira.

He shrugged off criticism from the democracy advocate Martin Lee that Britain had retreated from demands for "free, open and fair" democratic elections. — *Reuters, Hong Kong.*

EU members arm war zones

EUROPEAN UNION countries, including Britain, are still supplying weapons to African war zones despite arms embargoes. Saferworld, a London-based research group, discloses in a report published today.

The report lists more than 40 cases of arms sales to the Horn of Africa since 1991, with France, Belgium and, to a lesser extent, Britain most seriously implicated. They include the supply of Belgian missiles and fighter aircraft to Sudan, French Caravelle aircraft to former Zaire, and British small arms to Burundi, Uganda, Somalia and Sudan. — *Richard Norton-Taylor.*

Tenerife bails sect leader

THE leader of a suspected doomsday sect charged with attempted murder and inducement to suicide of her 31 followers was freed from jail yesterday.

Heide Fritman-Guthe, aged 57, a German psychologist, was released on bail from a Tenerife prison, the state news agency EFE said. She was arrested for allegedly planning the mass suicide of her followers on January 9, hours before the group thought the world would end. The followers, police said, believed a space ship would pick up their bodies at Teide mountain on Tenerife. — *AP, Santa Cruz de Tenerife.*

Nuclear first for Panama

SIXTY half-ton blocks of high-level nuclear waste sailed from the French port of Cherbourg yesterday bound for Japan, via the Panama Canal.

The Pacific Swan, owned by British Nuclear Fuels in Cumbria, is returning waste left from spent nuclear fuel from Japan which has been reprocessed into plutonium and uranium. It is the first time the canal has been used for such a shipment, to which Greenpeace and the Washington Nuclear Control Institute objected. — *Paul Brown, Embankment Correspondent.*

Feinstein refuses to run

THE United States Democratic senator for California, Dianne Feinstein, has announced she will not run for state governor this autumn, increasing speculation that she hopes to be drafted in as the party's vice-presidential candidate in 2000.

Ms Feinstein, aged 64, had been under pressure from President Bill Clinton to run for governor this year because polls showed her best placed to end 16 years of Republican governorship. She said she wanted to complete her Senate term, which expires in 2000. — *Martha Kettle, Washington.*

Vietnam fires on bikers

VIETNAMESE police will take aim at speeding motorcyclists with water cannon and tear-gas after failed efforts to clamp down on dangerous drag-racing.

For years, police in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have grappled with thrill-seeking youths who race their motorbikes in and out of heavy traffic, killing and injuring pedestrians. — *AP, Hanoi.*

End for death row veteran

AFTER 23 years awaiting execution in Arizona, and five dates with death, Jose Jesus Ceja was executed by injection early yesterday. He said nothing before slipping into a fatal coma.

Ceja, aged 42, had spent longer on death row than any other American. In June 1974, he murdered a young married couple whose house he had burgled. — *Christopher Reed, Los Angeles.*

43 killed in Algeria

FORTY-THREE people, including 21 rebels and seven members of one family, were killed in the latest surge of bloodshed. Algerian newspapers reported yesterday. Some died in two bomb attacks, as a European Union fact-finding team was winding up talks with the government on Tuesday. — *Reuters, Algiers.*

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Hillary Clinton: planned to stand behind her man



Gennifer Flowers: a 12-year affair during a 'bad patch'

The wife, the singer and the employee

HILLARY CLINTON Girlfriend from college and long-suffering wife reputedly furious at her husband's sexual indiscretions. A tough and clever lawyer — thought to be Cherie Booth's inspiration — she failed miserably to master the health brief given to her by her husband after he was elected in 1992. Tough and popular.

GENNIFER FLOWERS Blonde, sultry former cabaret singer who had a 12-year secret affair with Clinton before he was president. After she kissed and told on the eve of his election, she sold tapes of their telephone conversations. Most

damaging was her claim that he had offered her a local government job in exchange for sex.

PAULA JONES The only one of Clinton's accusers to go all the way to court. Claims Clinton demanded oral sex when they met in Arkansas while he was governor and she was a state employee. Exploding perm has given way to a sleek new hairstyle. Last seen on Saturday, after seeing the president face to face for the first time since they met at a deposition. If neither side agrees on a settlement, the case begins in May. Squeaky, high-pitched voice and girlish manner, but determined.



Paula Jones: Claims Clinton sexually harassed her, dropping his trousers and demanding sex in a hotel seven years ago

Republican rottweiler with a big bone to pick

Jonathan Freedland

HE MAKES an unlikely pitbull. Softly spoken, with the manner of an old-time Southern gentleman, Kenneth Starr is not the fast-talking, loudmouth American lawyer so beloved of Hollywood. Until his present job as independent counsel, he had never even been a prosecutor. He blanches at the use of obscenities and almost never talks to the press.

Friends and colleagues describe a cerebral, slightly stiff man of unfailing good manners. The son of an Anglo-phil Protestant minister in San Antonio, Texas, he is less midtown Manhattan than Middle Temple. At his million-dollar law practice he takes tea at 4pm. To relax, he reads Trollope. Now he is cast as the man who could topple the president of the United States.

Since summer 1994 Mr Starr has been hovering over Bill Clinton's shoulder, peering at every memo in the White House and raking over every financial and political transaction of Mr Clinton's career — from his election in 1978 as governor of Arkansas right up to the alleged goings-on with a fresh-faced trainee in the Oval Office. Critics say Mr Starr, a life-long Republican, has been engaged in the longest fishing expedition in

political history without finding any real dirt — until now. His original brief was as independent counsel investigating the Whitewater affair — the tangled bundle of allegations centred on a failed land development in Arkansas. Whitewater is a cash-for-influence scandal — with the then Governor Clinton accused of turning a blind eye to the fi-



Kenneth Starr: Independent counsel could topple Clinton

nancial misdemeanours of his business partner and political patron, James McDougal. In May 1996 Mr Starr struck gold: Mr McDougal, his wife Susan and Mr Clinton's successor as Arkansas governor, Jim Guy Tucker, were convicted on 24 counts of conspiracy and \$3 million (21.8 million) fraud. It was a famous victory. Mr Starr had persuaded an Arkansas jury to

reject the testimony of its favourite son.

By then Mr Starr had widened his target, adding scandal upon scandal to his grand inquisitor's remit. He was authorised to investigate charges that White House staff had obstructed the original Whitewater inquiry — and to look into two other "gates". The first, Travelgate, centred on claims that Hillary Clinton had purged the White House's internal travel office, handing the lucrative contract to a Clinton cousin. The first lady denies any role in that decision; Mr Starr has documents saying otherwise.

Next came "Filegate", the claim that Clinton aides had dug up top-secret FBI files on hundreds of Republicans. With echoes of Nixon's enemies list, Filegate still haunts the White House. Last week Mr Starr grilled Mrs Clinton about claims that the FBI files were sought on her orders. That session sparked speculation that he was giving her one last chance to change her story — before he indicts her.

Now he is looking into the most serious claims of all: yesterday's Watergate-era accusations of obstruction of justice, suborning aides to commit perjury and making false statements. What is more, his target is now President Clinton himself. The Republicans' favourite rottweiler is closing in on his prey.

Unremarkable intern finds herself in the spotlight

MONICA Lewinsky was an unpaid White House intern used to relative anonymity when she began the career that landed her in yesterday's headlines.

She finished college in the spring of 1995 and entered the White House shortly afterwards. Ms Lewinsky took a bachelor's degree in psychology at Lewis and Clark in Oregon, was not an honours student and was not known for any particular interest or activity.

What is known about the woman behind the news stories is culled from public records and colleagues. Ms Lewinsky worked without pay in the office of then White House chief of staff, Leon Panetta.

Six months later, in December 1995, she moved to a paid position handling correspondence in the Office of Legislative Affairs.

In April 1996 she moved to the defence department, where she worked as secretary to the spokesman, Kenneth Bacon, until December 26 1997.

Until late last year she listed her home as the Watergate, the luxury apartment building and hotel that was the scene of the notorious break-in that led to President Nixon's downfall. — *AP.*

Read the latest European news without using a phrasebook.

The Guardian

سكنا من الاخبار

Mugabe sees 'white conspiracy'

Alex Duval Smith in Harare

ZIMBABWEAN officials yesterday accused the country's white minority of funding unrest over soaring food prices, as soldiers and riot police descended on at least one Harare township and beat apparently innocent residents, using tactics condemned by Amnesty International.

After President Robert Mugabe blamed a "political conspiracy" for riots and looting which yesterday spread to the eastern city of Mutema, he ordered an emergency cabinet meeting in set-up a ministerial price control panel.

On the third day of protests, riot police, augmented by thousands of soldiers using armoured vehicles, helicopters and tear gas, largely succeeded in keeping protesters out of Harare's city centre.

Police said they had arrested 300 people in townships around the capital. Amnesty International reported four unconfirmed deaths since protests began on Monday against a 21 per cent rise in the price of maize meal. It followed a 24 per cent increase a fortnight earlier.

Mr Mugabe, south-west of Harare, a police area where shops were smashed and looted on Monday, soldiers and riot police yesterday ordered residents indoors and beat up others.

The information minister, Chen Chimpenzwe, said recent political events "lead me to believe that white farmers and industrialists are funding the disruption".

The claim was widely dis-

missed as a desperate attempt to shift the focus from economic mismanagement, which in three months has seen inflation soar and the Zimbabwean dollar plummet.

David Hasluck, whose Commercial Farmers' Union represents 4,000 large-scale farmers who own the best third of Zimbabwe's arable land, said: "The claim is absolute nonsense. White farmers are busy farming."

Petros Nyatsanza, an Anglican priest in Mutema township, spent yesterday taking in injured residents at his vicarage.

He said: "The police and soldiers are brutal. They went into the home of a man who was recovering from an operation, saw a bottle of beer on the table and beat him around the head with a rifle butt, on the basis that a bottle store was looted on Monday."

In the space of an hour in Mutema yesterday, a girl aged five, or six, was shot in the arm and a boy, aged 16, was shot in the leg.

Reverend Nyatsanza said: "The gunfire started on Monday evening. They are just intimidating people and do not mind who they pick. Women are being beaten because they cannot run away in time."

Mr Chimpenzwe claimed police and troops had intervened only against looters. "These are organised gangs and we have a duty to maintain law and order at all cost."

Amnesty International condemned the government's policy, announced on Tuesday, of "shooting trouble-makers and looters", and urged the authorities to respect the rights of those in custody.



Chaos reigns at a Tokyo station as passengers trying to board a train collide with those trying to get off within the 15 seconds that the doors stay open. PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN ROGERS



Chaos reigns at a Tokyo station as passengers trying to board a train collide with those trying to get off within the 15 seconds that the doors stay open. PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN ROGERS

Larger tin for Japan's 'sardine' commuters

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo on plans to get more people on to overcrowded trains

"THE next train on platform 12 is running 30 seconds late. We apologise for the delay."

It is 8.30am on Tokyo's Yamanote line, the busiest railway in the world. When the train stops, the doors seem to burst open under pressure from the crush inside. Hundreds of bodies spill out — many more than try to cram their way in. A buzzer sounds and bags, coats, hands and bottoms are trapped in the closing doors until white-gloved station attendants provide the final shove to jam the stragglers inside.

Although the trains come like clockwork at 3½-minute intervals, every carriage is filled to three times its official capacity. The crush is such that it is not unknown for passengers to incur broken ribs.

During the morning rush hour, 184,000 commuters squeeze their way on to the Yamanote line, the 22-mile-old Yamanote line is also said to be the most punctual staff even apologise for delays of less than a minute.

"During peak hours the trains are so frequent that customers expect one immediately," said Toshihide Watanabe, an East Japan Railway

spokesman. "If the service is a little late, they tend to wonder what happened. To put their minds at rest and maintain their trust, we announce even the smallest delay."

Despite the passenger crush at the Yamanote line's 31 stations, trains stop for less than 15 seconds. To minimise hold-ups, platforms are marked so passengers can line up exactly in front of a door. At busy stations, such as Shinjuku, there are two or three attendants to rush passengers into each carriage.

There is also a disincentive for those thinking of committing suicide: the dead person's family is usually held responsible for the clean-up costs.

According to Ms Watanabe, the Yamanote line is also the biggest earner for East Japan Railway, the most profitable of the companies created by the 1987 privatisation of Japan Railways.

Those profits have been threatened recently by government demands that East Japan Railway contribute 357.9 billion yen (£1.6 billion) to help pay off the enormous debts left behind by its state-run predecessor.

Whatever the changes, the Yamanote line's primary goals remain the same. "We aim to maintain a service that is safe and 100 per cent punctual," said Mr Watanabe. "But surely that is the same in every country."

Australian desert guide charged with 'drink-driving' camels

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

IN ONE of the most bizarre drink-drive cases to go before the courts, an Australian Outback bushman has been charged with being drunk in charge of a pair of camels.

Police stopped Ricky Hall, aged 35, during a trip to a waterhole on the outskirts of the Oodnadatta desert community. The camels were pulling a cart carrying 12 tourists.

After Mr Hall was told he was too drunk to manage the camels, he handed the reins to a volunteer. But a policeman claimed Mr Hall was still directing the animals by voice command.

Police claim that after Mr Hall tried to flee on a skin camel hitched to the cart, a scuffle broke out and he was restrained with a pepper spray before being arrested. Mr Hall is due to appear before a magistrate in March to face two charges of drink-driving a camel.

UN chief fails to get access to palaces

Julian Borger Middle East Correspondent

AFTER failing to overcome the Iraqi government's refusal to allow United Nations weapons inspectors to search Saddam Hussein's presidential palaces, the UN chief inspector, Richard Butler, left Baghdad yesterday with little to show for his two-day visit.

When leaving the UN Security Council headquarters, Mr Butler was seen on an Iraqi demand that the UN Special Commission on Iraq (Unscim) suspend its requests to inspect "presidential sites" and a demand that Mr Butler said "lies in the face" of UN resolutions calling for unrestricted access.

Britain's Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, also injected the proposal, saying in Hong Kong yesterday that it "strains credulity". He said: "We cannot allow him to decide where the inspectors can go and where they cannot go."

Iraq called for inspections of the palaces to be put off until April, when international expert commissions are expected to report on the results of the UN monitoring. The Iraqi deputy foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, also told Mr Butler that his government had handed over all relevant documentation and had nothing more to disclose. Mr Cook maintained that

the use of military power to force Iraqi compliance had not been ruled out. Britain has sent the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible and a battle-ship escort to the Gulf in support of a substantial United States force already in place.

In a speech in naval service in Japan, the US defence secretary, William Cohen, said his government preferred a diplomatic solution to the current standoff. He said the UN monitoring was determined not to allow Baghdad to threaten its neighbours with biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Russian diplomatic intervention defused an earlier Iraqi demand that UN inspectors be allowed to inspect buildings spread over large areas. The only progress Mr But-

ler made in Baghdad was an agreement to establish an international experts panel to review the UN investigation into the dismantling of Iraq's "special warheads", capable of carrying chemical or biological payloads.

A panel will also look at Iraq's biological weapons programme, which Mr Butler described as the "worst area by a long shot" in terms of disarmament progress. "I expect the meetings to be a helpful device to try to have some more scientific objectivity," Mr Butler said.

But he also failed to persuade Baghdad to allow Scott Ritter, the US weapons expert denounced as a spy by Iraq, to take part in the inspections.



Anti-poaching brigades are trying to stem the killing of Siberian tigers (above), but only 415 are left and their number is falling. PHOTOGRAPH: C. THOUVENIN

Tiger's survival at risk worldwide say experts

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

AS THE Chinese prepare to celebrate their new year next week and usher in the Year of the Tiger, the country's medicine men are hunting the species to extinction, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said yesterday.

The prospects for all the world's tigers are grim, but the South China sub-species is down to 20 in the wild and expected to be wiped out soon. There are five sub-species of tiger left, compared with eight 100 years ago. Total numbers have dropped by 95 per cent in that time. There are believed to be between 3,000 and 7,500 left in the wild.

Yesterday WWF pledged \$750,000 for a new emergency fund to attempt to turn 1998 into the year "for the tiger".

Its Tiger Status report makes depressing reading. It suggests the Indian tiger may also be doomed, not just through loss of habitat, but also because of poachers supplying the demands of Chinese medicine.

The Chinese have used tiger bones in dozens of medical preparations for 1,000 years. The demand is as high as ever, even though there is no evidence that the preparations work.

The largest single sub-group is the Indian or Bengal tiger, estimated to number between 2,500 and 3,000 — about half the world's population. They are also found in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. At most about 500 are left in Indian reserves.

WWF is optimistic about its conservation programmes, but Valmik Thapara of the World Conservation Union suggests that by the next Year

of the Tiger in 2010, the animal might be as rare in the wild as the dragon — the only mythical beast among Chinese astrologers' 12 signs.

Already gone are the Bali, Caspian and Javan tigers. Russia is home to the Amur, or Siberian tiger, but its numbers have dropped dramatically since the fall of the Soviet Union, according to the report.

WWF has set up six anti-poaching brigades to stem the killing. They have carried out 30 raids, confiscating firearms, tiger skins and bones. A recent census showed there were 415 Siberian tigers left. The Indo-Chinese sub-species is found in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The vastness and remoteness of the areas roamed by the tigers of this species make counting almost impossible. Estimates range between 1,100 and 1,800.

US teenagers join rock against abortion

Laurie Goodstein in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

TEENAGE boys with spiky hair and girls with nose rings stepped into the church basement with their \$4 admission fee and a jar of baby food. Punk and hard-core bands unleashed deafening waves of sound, but between songs the rockers preached against abortion.

They welcomed to the stage a young organiser to help lead the fight. "Every day 400 children are killed by surgical abortion. This is your generation, you guys," said Cathy Brown, aged 26, of the American Life League, which her mother founded. "One-third of your generation are gone. It's your brothers and sisters and friends who would have been here today."

At a Rock for Life concert in the recreation hall of a Methodist church, applauding Ms Brown and raising money for a centre that counsels pregnant women against abortion, is the new wave of the anti-abortion movement.

"These are young people for whom legal abortion has always been a fact of life. But to them, abortion is a violation of human rights far more heinous than slavery. They talk

about abortion as a holocaust. They see themselves as freedom riders, a courageous counterculture that will ultimately prevail."

The younger generation of the anti-abortion movement say the only way to avoid unwanted pregnancy is abstinence. They do not believe in sex before marriage. They are trying to persuade

They say the way to avoid unwanted pregnancy is abstinence. They condemn sex before marriage.

their peers that killing a fertilised egg is just as heinous a crime as that of Susan Smith, the mother who strangled her two children in her car, seats and rolled the car into a lake. Rock for Life's best-selling bumper sticker says simply, "Abortion is Mean."

"I honestly, really don't understand why abortion is legal," said Crissy Verhagen, aged 18, after performing a song she wrote with her pop-punk band from New Jersey.

"You see songbooks, you see five fingers. If it really is alive and has a heartbeat, then why is it legal to kill? To me, it's hypocrisy. If a teenager gets pregnant, they brought that situation on themselves."

As with many people who oppose abortion, these young people are Christians, and many belong to evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Few are Roman Catholic. They are the children of teachers, secretaries and police officers. Almost all of them are white.

The anti-abortion and abstinence campaigns work together. A youth group called the SALT — Saviour's Alliance for Lifting the Truth — distributed pamphlets on abstinence at a music festival last summer publicising the failure rate of condoms. The young slogan pledges called True Love Waits.

Young people today reflect the same ambivalence toward abortion that exists among the public at large, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll. In that survey, 29 per cent of 18-to-29-year-olds said that abortion should be generally available, 48 per cent said it should be available but under stricter limits, and 21 per cent said it should not be permitted at all. — New York Times

Unabomber suspect's defence team suspects 'hidden shackles'

Christopher Hood in Los Angeles

LAWYERS defending the accused Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski have accused the prosecution of possibly concealing two more "shackles" he maintained, together with the tiny cabin in which he lived for 20 years in Montana.

A special hearing into the surprise allegation was being held yesterday in Sacramento, California, by a federal magistrate, as the judge in the case, Garland Burrell, prepared to make crucial judgments today about the future of the increasingly complicated trial.

Mr Kaczynski, a former maths professor, is on trial for his life for the murder of two men and the making of two others during a 17-year mail bombing campaign. His defence filed a motion in court saying the disclosure about the sheds came from a media source. But Mr Kaczynski had written in his journal about sheds he had built as "a refuge to which he could retreat when the encroachments of organised society on his life at the cabin became too great to endure."

If the cabin exists they would explain the extraordinary amount of evidence the FBI produced after arresting Mr Kaczynski in 1996 at his 10X13ft hut. Agents listed

three typewriters, 10 three-ring binders, tools and equipment for making bombs, his hatred of modern society, and 200 books, some in Spanish and German.

No motive for concealing the other shackles has yet emerged, although the defence argues that they might have contained evidence that would help Mr Kaczynski, or even clear him of the crimes. The prosecution has been evasive, saying only that several abandoned "structures" had been found in the area, which had once been mined.

Mr Kaczynski's self-described need for privacy seems odd in the context of the isolation he already experienced had at the original cabin. It has since been moved by lorry to the court in California for later inspection by the jury. He lived hermit style in a wooded, mountain area of federal land with no running water or electricity, and only a pot-bellied stove for warmth.

However, his insistence on even more privacy may help his defence lawyers' determination to show that after 20 years in the cabin, his mind was seriously disturbed, and that he suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. Judge Burrell is deliberating on this aspect after the completion of a week-long mental examination of Mr Kaczynski by a prison psychiatrist.

The scourge of racism

Germany must curb it in all its subtle variants

IN THE dying days of the German Democratic Republic, the vast demonstrations which swept away the communist leadership seemed an unalloyed good. Yet even then there were voices warning that alongside the liberals, the socialists, and the Christians on the streets were those moved by a nationalism which inclined to racism, which had not wholly repudiated Nazism, and which regretted the defeat of 1945. It was hardly surprising that such traditions should survive in a Russian-dominated half-state. The GDR had no experience to compare to an economically successful Federal Republic's full integration as a valued partner into the Western system and little exposure to the pluralist and multi-racial ideas that shaped neo-communist countries.

Neo-Nazism had already by that time been for years a form of youth protest and provocation which the communist authorities had tried in vain to suppress. What is sobering is that more than six years after unification it still is. The reports on the situation in the east by our Bonn correspondent, Ian Traynor, give us a dismal picture of a significant number of small towns and inner city youth given over to hatred of foreigners, attracted to the neo-Nazi ideas of the Republikaner Party, and dedicated, at least in theory, to the notion of establishing "foreigner-free" liberated zones. In this, they have the tacit support of some of their elders, something of which we have been aware since the crowds in Rostock placidly watched foreigners being attacked in 1992.

Notoriously, east Germans are disillusioned, and have reason to be. The Kohl government did not do enough to keep East German firms in being, while West German industry, which should have acted patriotically and moved in to replace the inefficient factories and offices which were closed or reduced in

size after unification, did not do so on a big enough scale. East Germans were drawn into a society where economic power and material plenty were of even more central importance than they are in other Western societies, and then found themselves with relatively little of either. In the inevitable "Little Germany" reaction, the ideas of European unity, ecological purity, and racial animity which counterpoint the economic emphasis in western Germany have had limited influence in the east. What eastern Germany needs has not been given is the kind of targeted multi-racial programmes at school, youth club, and university which have changed hearts and minds in other countries.

Western Germany is not at all exempt from these developments. An unpleasant chemistry between the Far Right in the two halves of Germany has seen racist gangs traveling east to stir up trouble, and the Republikaner Party and other rightist German groups taking heart at the thought of eastern reinforcements. The Defence Minister, Volker Rühe, has had to accept a parliamentary inquiry into neo-Nazi incidents in the army. Worse than Neo-Nazism proper and the dribble of neo-Nazi incidents in the west is the fact that West Germans who would not consciously embrace racist or far right ideas, seem ready to work themselves up into a hysterical state over immigrants and foreigners, as the recent uproar over Kurds shows. What is happening in both halves of Germany in an election year is that the mainstream political agenda is being affected by racist and extremist ideas. A government which sees itself as a leader in Europe surely has a duty to curb the growth of racist attitudes whether in the crude protest form they take in the east or the more subtle variants seen in the west.

Let's boycott Boycott

Sport must take a hard line against the batterers

IN the West Indies they refer to the man at the crease as "the batter." How appropriate that term now seems for Geoffrey Boycott, convicted by a French court for assaulting his former lover, punching her 20 times and leaving her with two black eyes. The former England batsman got away lightly — with a three-month suspended jail sentence and a fine of £5,000. But his punishment should not end there: he has not lost his liberty, but he should lose his reputation.

For Geoffrey Boycott is just the latest in a succession of sporting "heroes" who have been exposed as batterers of women. In 1996 Paul Gascoigne's wife Sheryl emerged bruised and bandaged, the victim of her own husband's rage. At the end of last year Laura Bruno got a court injunction barring husband Frank, the former heavyweight boxing champion of the world, from "assaulting, molesting or harassing" her. In Florida a shelter has been set up as a haven for women abused by sportsmen, so great is the demand. And yet, time after time, the men of violence are effectively forgiven. They are not ostracised, but allowed to resume their place in public life — as if their athletic prowess somehow mitigated their crime. The response to Gazza's pummeling of Sheryl was typical: he was picked to play for England at the very next fixture.

This routine turning of a collective blind eye has gone on long enough. Just as voters would throw out a politician

exposed as a wife-beater, so the sporting public has to shun the abusers in their midst. Domestic violence is not a "private matter" — between one in four and one in ten British women are beaten by their men, so that just under half of all assaults against women are committed by their partners. It is a public scandal, and it's time it was treated as such.

The world of sport can take the lead. The problem there, say the experts, has some specific features: men in a man's world, used to settling their disputes physically, reared to be tough and in charge. But there is also a particular opportunity. For if sporting officialdom takes a hard line against spousal abuse, then the message will reach an audience as yet unschooled in the finer points of feminist thinking. Yesterday's phone-in on BBC Radio 5 Live showed how far there is to go, as male callers suggested Mr Boycott's former lover might have "provoked" an attack by her style of dress and that every man had to "discipline" his wife now and again.

Mr Boycott's employers at the BBC and Sky can swiftly discredit such thinking. They can terminate the batterer's commenting contracts, just as NBC and Hertz did when they learned of OJ Simpson's violence against his former wife. As one caller said yesterday, if Mr Boycott had beaten up Richie Benaud rather than Margaret Moore in that hotel room the BBC would have sacked him immediately. Cricket has but one option to follow: it must boycott Boycott.

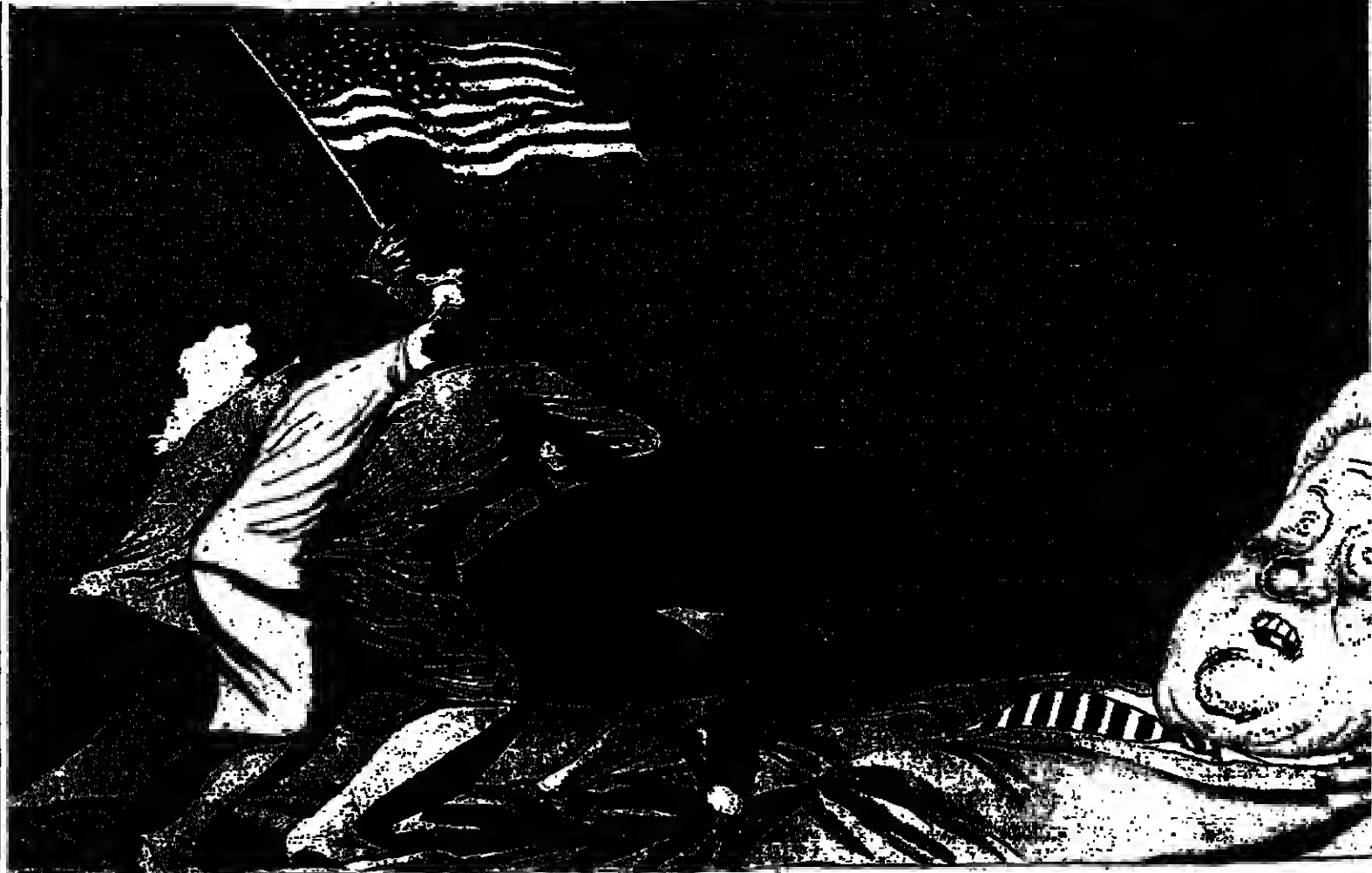
Writing with last year's Bradshaw

The end of a courtroom drama in which satire rests its own case

This was not written by Alan Clark. January 21: Oh God, judgment day. Can't bear that dreary court again especially as the Bollinger at breakfast is starting to go to my head. All for being judged by my peers, but Justice Lightman! Doesn't even dare mention his school in Who's Who and — no joking — lists the Royal Automobile as his club. (Isn't that the one with the swimming pool?) Probably thinks I have designs on his wife. Don't, really don't. Haven't even seen her. Yet. Would love to have gone to J's chemistry session this morning, but better be somewhere respectable just in case. So, to the House to support David (Maclean) in the debate on "tax avoidance and offshore trusts". Strictly for little people. Apparently we've all got to nail someone called Robinson for not surrendering his offshore trusts to the tax man (Applied generally, of course, this would bankrupt every Tory who

doesn't need to buy his own furniture). Robinson definitely buys his own furniture (though, I'm told, his father was a furniture manufacturer). Trade. Firm.

Boring, tedious, as expected. Relieved only by opportunity to fondle (metaphorically, alas) one or two of Blair's brainless — but fortunately also brainless — babes on the other side. Message passed to me. I've won my case. The Justice's wife is safe. So is my honour. Thank God. No one seems to have cottoned on to the act of bringing it to court undermined my whole case because, overnight, everyone suddenly knew that the Evening Standard Diaries weren't written by me — which is all I wanted to establish. Anyway, it will all make fodder for my next diaries. Or would. Getting too old to find the energy. May have to use a ghost writer this time. What about this chap Peter Bradshaw. Seems to have a good turn of phrase... doesn't he?



Letters to the Editor

My friend, Gordon Brown

I HAVE known Gordon Brown since we were students together, almost 30 years ago (GPs' fury at row over Brown 'flaw', January 20). He can be Mr Grumpy at times but I do not recognise the brooding, "flawed" psychia now portrayed by the spin doctors and sneaks of London Town.

Like many of Gordon's old friends, I was happy to help Paul Routledge with his book on the understanding that (as I would expect from a writer of his calibre) it was a serious, independent biography of the Chancellor and his associates had no editorial control. As a courtesy, I checked that Gordon and his family had no objection to my participation. I didn't tell him or them what I proposed to say to the author and they didn't ask. What I then wrote to Mr Routledge was, I hope, not uncritical.

My copy of the book has not

yet reached these northern latitudes. George Galloway appears to have intercepted it at Glasgow Airport — but from press reports I gather Mr Routledge found Gordon Brown a well-meaning, hard-working, likeable fellow. That is not surprising. The MP for Dumfries East has a gift for friendship.

Many of his friends were furious when he decided not to contest the Labour leadership election. Some of us were almost as angry as Gordon (for not giving party members the choice) as we were at the subterranean clique who plotted against him and ignored the wishes of the late John Smith.

The same people, if not their master, would now have us believe Gordon was consumed by smoldering resentment and lowering ambition. The truth was more creditable: he did what he thought best for the party, not necessarily for himself. Faced

with bitter personal disappointment and cowardly, unfair attacks, he followed his father's Kirk of Scotland principles and turned the other cheek. If I may quote, without permission, a member of his constituency staff at the time: "Gordon just accepted it and got on with his job, like the gentleman he is".

It was his friends who fanned their wrath to keep it warm and who unburdened themselves to Mr Routledge. So His Master's Voice can blame us, not Gordon, for stirring it up again. While I disagree with some of my former flatmate's reported views on budgetary policy for the welfare state, I refuse to believe Gordon Brown is in politics for Gordon Brown.

He didn't authorise me to write this, by the way. But he wasn't asked. Jonathan Wills, Bressay, Shetland.

Sex 'n' shopping

THERE have been calls from some for Robin Cook to reconsider his position as Foreign Secretary, because he has left his wife for another woman. Will the same people be calling for Geoffrey Boycott to resign as a cricket commentator, now that he has been found guilty of assaulting his ex-partner (Boycott fined £5,000 after 'barbaric' attack on lover, January 21)? Or, as in the case of Paul Gascoigne, is violence acceptable, while leaving your spouse intact?

True Bray, 45 Elmfield Meadow, Wilmshurst, Wokingham, Berks RG41 5UW.

I AM surprised that you find shopping boring (Leader, January 20). Sainsbury's, which you mention, does its best to make it a battle of wits. They challenge me to work out whether I will do better to buy their own house brand at a lower price or another brand at a higher price but with Reward Card points. Moreover, a Reward Card voucher is worth only £2.50 in exchange for goods in Sainsbury's but £5 in part exchange for a meal for two in one of Wilmshurst's restaurants. Fortunately I am a graduate of the London School of Economics.

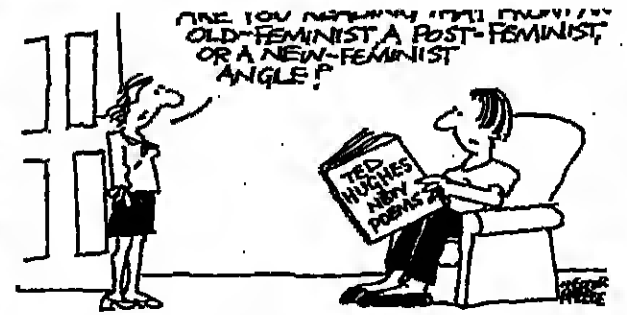
Eric A Rose, 171 Linden Court, London W5 1AL.

YOUR Leader on the NHS Review and Conference (January 19) is grossly misleading. To set the record straight, the NHS Executive has not invited BUPA to sponsor the Review and Conference in support of the NHS 50th anniversary. This Review has no official standing. It is being organised independently by the NHS Confederation, the Institute of Health Services Management and the International Hospitals Federation.

Helen McCallum, Head, NHS Executive Communications, Quarry House, Leeds LS5 7UB.

IF your report that Americans who lack confidence in the presidency (Sex is good for you, January 20) have above-average sex lives: since Bill Clinton is alleged to have a very active sex life, does that mean that he lacks confidence in himself?

Ben Bartle, 143 Willfield Way, London NW11 6KY.



Why Ted Hughes is a hero

TED Hughes did not kill Sylvia Plath. What killed her was her own "mental instability" and her own "extremes of passion and suffering", to use Katharine Viner's words (The blood of poetry, January 20). To make Hughes responsible for her art or her death is to diminish Plath.

Hughes' silence has been dignified and proper. His passion and his love for Plath, after all these years, is clear in the poem quoted from Birthday Letters. Hughes' testimony in Birthday Letters will be a refreshing re-balancing of an unequal scale. To claim that he will now have the last word is to oversimplify the dynamics of his

life with Plath, and to deny the life of the debate, which will surely continue. Plath has spoken — again and again — and again — through her poems, her journals and through Letters Home, the volume of letters she wrote to her mother, as well as through the many biographies, most of which have "taken her side" and painted a rather poor picture of Ted Hughes.

Plath was not a poet at the height of her powers. She was on an upward path, heading towards the heights. But she did not reach them. Ian Tromp, 17 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8EG.

New feminists

ANGELA Phillips argues that her story has been misrepresented by the new feminists (Best theatre, date, January 20). However, I feel that the "new feminists" continue to reflect the diversity of the "old feminists".

Phillips' statement that "life comes in three parts: before childcare, during childcare and post childcare" stands contrary to much of my research into the newly emerged 29 to 44-year-old population. These women do indeed experience themselves as women with motherhood (imagined, experienced, chosen, unchosen, denied) as a key reference point; but, unlike Phillips seems to suggest, not the only, or primary reference point. The younger generation are experiencing other key relationships, for example to work. This reflects a move towards serial employment and serial monogamy as defining life processes.

Far from knocking over the older generation, perhaps one contributory reason is that they are doing what Phillips not unkindly wishes they would do — they were standing on her generation's shoulders, after all. Perhaps the issue is rather that no one guaranteed what would happen when they did.

Judith Burnard, Department of Sociology, University of East London, Dagenham, Essex RM9 2AS.

Fringe cuts

WELL, it's terrific that, according to a new survey, the strongest complimentary theatre is coming through about the British from abroad is that we are "among the very best in the world" in the arts (Cold Comfort for witty British, January 19). It appears also that we are self-deprecating. With regard to the arts, self-destructive is more like it.

This very week the London Arts Board will be announcing their long fore-shadowed life-threatening cuts to 13 arts organisations. These include the only producing theatre in south-east London, at Greenwich, and two valuable fringe theatres, the Gate and the King's Head.

Of the 13, four are black and one of those, Carib, is the only black-run young people's theatre and another, Vast Azzurra, is the only black-run arts centre in London. Why choose now to back away at the community's, and in particular the black community's, grassroots?

Why doesn't the London Arts Board follow the Arts Council of England's lead? It is keeping as many client organisations as possible alive until the summer when the government's changes to the Lottery rules will have come through, and more money will be available for the arts? Philip Medley, Artistic director, Theatre Royal Stratford East, London E15 1BN.

On the perils of being old, mad or both in contemporary Britain

LINDA Grant is to be congratulated for exposing the real ongoing failures of care in the community policy and not just those highlighted by recent headline tragedies (The horror beyond Bedlam, January 20).

The current system has deprived the elderly and seriously mentally ill of the last vestige of care and treatment — a right to refuge and dignified long-term care in a hospital or community residential setting. These are citizens who cannot help themselves and whose families have few rights.

Marjorie Wallace, Chief executive, SANE, 199-205 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 6QP.

THE circumstances surrounding the care of Linda Grant's mother sound atrocious. However, that should not obscure the fact that some points in her article are uncalled for.

For example, to write that "you have to be practically dead in order to get your local authority to pay for you to have a place in an institution" is simply not true, and does a massive disservice to the many thousands of people whose care is provided or paid for by social services in high quality residential homes.

Her plea for a review of services is knocking on an open door: a Royal Commission on long term care for older people has recently been announced, and comprehensive spending reviews are taking place in virtually every part of government.

Roy Taylor, President, Association of Directors of Social Services, 9 Artillery Lane, London E1.

SO what is Linda Grant saying? That all individuals should forego their homes when they become

older, or when they develop dementia? Or only when they become abusive, violent and lashing out at carers?

A proportion of sufferers will require care in an institutional setting and in many areas, provision of, or funding for, residential care is inadequate. Nevertheless her views of private homes are generalised and ill-informed and the picture she paints of one home is, in my experience, untypical. More importantly she ignores the fact that many people with Alzheimer's disease can continue to lead enjoyable lives and that very few represent a threat to others.

Dr Jonathan Hillman, Consultant in old age psychiatry, King's Lynn & Wisbech Hospitals, Norfolk PE30 5PD.

OF COURSE there are problems with community care but that does not make the policy itself flawed. The last thing we need is to throw the whole thing into the melting pot again.

There is no doubt that secure care and indeed sanctuary must be provided where necessary but most people would prefer to live outside institutions if properly supported.

Similarly most relatives want to provide care for their relatives. Carers though, require two things in order to do this successfully. First, guaranteed levels of support in the form of respite care and adequate income and, second, assurance that if they finally cannot cope, good quality residential care will be available. Providing these assurances will cost money, but nothing like the £85 billion per annum which is the value of so-called "informal" care.

Baroness Pitkeathley, Chief executive, Carenet National Association, 20/22 Glasshouse Yard, London EC1A 4JS.

Awayday prisons don't work

THE idea of day or weekend imprisonment to which you gave guarded support (Tackling crime at the weekend, January 21) was last seriously considered in 1984. The Home Secretary at the time, Sir Leon Brittan, was in favour.

But it never got off the ground because of problems with the prospective cost, location and staffing of what we might label Awayday Prisons.

A much better proposal is that also floated in your

Leader: extending the age range of those eligible for attendance centre orders. Attendance centres provide one of the cheapest but least known sanctions for young offenders. Providing an equivalent system for adults might fill a gap in the court's armoury without any of the disadvantages of weekend imprisonment.

Stephen Shaw, Director, Prison Reform Trust, 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 6AH.

A Country Diary

SUTHERLAND: This is a huge county by any standard but although there are vast areas of wilderness — as opposed to wilderness, some of the land use practices have been so shameful, to say the least. In the globally important flower country with its areas of blanket bog, tens of thousands of acres have been planted up with conifers, although this has never been proved to be economical. In the west the amount of overgrazing by deer and sheep against a background of overburning has been and is disgraceful. However the county is still important for breeding birds despite the criminal waste of resources and this is the subject of the latest book on The Birds of Sutherland by Alan Vintery. A survey in 1986 found 53 pairs of black-throated divers which is 29 per cent of the British population. These facts, plus the even rarer breeding birds such as wood sandpiper and brambling, indicates the importance of the county but

there are some fascinating facts about much commoner birds. For example, why is the carrion crow relentlessly moving northwards and pushing the hooded crow to the harshest part of the hinterland and the north-west extremes? Fulmars are nesting up to four miles inland in the south-east corner and they are predated by golden eagles that fly in from further inland. Interestingly sand martins still occasionally nest in a "natural" site in the famous Smoo Cave on the north coast. In contrast some birds are extinct or almost so — the corncrake, red-necked phalarope and capercaillie whilst sadly the egg collectors are still affecting the success of both peregrine and osprey! On a more optimistic note, the numbers of great skuas and arctic skuas have increased especially on the island of Hunda where they are now an amazing 116 pairs and 29 pairs respectively.

RAY COLLIER

Diary

Matthew Norman

JOHAN Berrow, the new Tory MP for Bucklebury, has a rich and lively CV. Author of the John Berrow Guide to Understanding Women (which offered guidance on, among much else, "how to get rid of a girl during sex"), he is also a former secretary of the Monday Club's race and equal opportunities committee. Perhaps, then, it was only a matter of time before he would emerge as an important political thinker. Early evidence of this lies in Hansard, which records his contribution to a European debate on Monday. When Labour's Denis MacShane rose but failed to interrupt his speech, Mr Berrow turned swiftly upon a man "who feels pain because he is unable to contribute to our debates," he said, "and so contents himself with tanning us by showing the disgusting and vulgar loud European socks that he is wearing." The socks are blue. Even so, Mr Berrow insisted that they are a matter "of the utmost seriousness, with portentous consequences for the future of our country." Sparkling. We look forward to hearing more from Mr Berrow soon.

THE opinion polls may not improve, but at least the Tories make relentless progress in coordination. The MP David Winnick had a Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday, and on reaching his office in the morning found a message reading as follows: "From David Littleton (Hague's PPS). 'You're down for PM's today. Please contact me supplementary or go to room H at 12.15.' Mr Winnick is a Labour MP, in fact, and on the left of the party, but it's a small detail which can hardly obscure the Tories' giant organisational strides.

THE return to newspapers of Kelvin MacKenzie brings exciting times at Monty Montgomery's Mirror Group, but perhaps the most notable twist on yesterday's merry-go-round was the hiring of Neil Wallis as editor of the People. This provoked a flood of faxes to Kelvin from Mr Wallis's old colleagues at the Sun, where he was deputy to the temperamental Stuart Higgins. "I faxes not of protest, however, but congratulating him on taking this abusive fellow off their hands, many on the lines of 'there is a God'." Mr Wallis used to be known as Wolfman because of a very bushy beard, and when this monstrosity vanished, someone asked Kelvin if he knew why. "He shaved it off," said Kelvin. "cos I told him it was beginning to tickle my arse." We wish the reunited couple joy of each other in Monty's magical kingdom.

CONFUSION enshrouds the New Labour approach to internal discipline. In the summer, Lord Geth Frankland was expelled from the party for the offence, as stated in a letter from the NEC, of "calling a front bench spokesman a bastard" (in a private conversation in the pub). That winter was Gordon Brown. Meanwhile, Sunday's Observer reported that "a senior source inside Downing Street" described the Chancellor as "psychologically flawed" if Geth was kicked out for calling him a bastard, what penalty awaits whoever questioned his sanity? And if, as the Observer stated, this briefing was given with Mr Tony Blair's approval, where does this leave the Prime Minister? A call to Downing Street provides no answers. "Is that the Guardian Diary?" asks a press officer. "Oh, it is. Well, I'm sorry, we don't waste time on you." Click, brrr.

THE time for school league tables has come, and boroughs from all over the country have filed the results of tests taken by 11-year-olds to the Press Association, which computes them. The London Borough of Haringey is ploughing a lone furrow this year, however, and has sent in the confidential plans for the renovation of the Wimbledon Greyhound track. What's wrong with them? Don't they know that you simply cannot gamble with your children's education?

TRY TO WRITE SOMETHING THAT WOULD USE RUBY ALLISON

Creative writing

I can identify the exact moment when that lesson finally sank in. It was in Algeria in 1961. Following an appalling episode in which I had seen 60-year-old white demonstrators mown down by ill-disciplined Arab troops in the French army.

Just one soundbite cuts down the sceps

Commentary

Hugo Young

GIVEN the many problems of William Hague's Tory Party, perhaps it is not surprising that so few of its members are prepared to address the largest truth about it, which is that the party as we know it is almost certainly finished. The party of the broad church will soon be dead and gone, and the Patriotic Alliance will be its epitaph. It did not take much effort for Mr Blair to utter those words this week. The concept they express is one of the few resonant labels British pro-Europeans have found in the last 25 years. A single soundbite removes from the Euro-sceptics their strongest card. But it will also detach from Conservatism a vital segment of the people who make up the living, breathing reality of the party.

For it is certain that something like this Alliance will be formed. Blair's appeal took the Tory Europeans by surprise, and their immediate response is awaited. But there

will be Conservatives, sooner or later, who go over to the Government's side on the most contentious issue of the day. They will do so because they can do so other, and their action will matter. The Tory leadership seem to be in such a state of denial about this that one must ask what, exactly, they are blind to. I think it is not so much about the arguments for and against Europe as about the nature of political conviction.

For the last decade, true conviction about Europe has resided, in the opinion of most sceptics, entirely on their side. And this has not been entirely unbelievable. While the Major Government dithered and dithered, coming at Brussels while complying with EU norms, a doughy band of dissenters sacrificed their careers in the cause of making further Euro-integration as hard as possible. These, it could seem, were the men of principle, speaking with patriotic honesty against the federalist entanglement that was slowly throttling the life of an independent country.

They now know they were speaking, moreover, for a majority of the party, as witness Mr Hague's arrival at the top. For it is certain that something like this Alliance will be formed. Blair's appeal took the Tory Europeans by surprise, and their immediate response is awaited. But there

by the people, as they fervently imagine, who did not lose the election: whose ascendancy, indeed, might have secured, behind full-throated Euro-phobia, the victory over Blair which the devoted Clarke and the dreaded Heseltine turned into certain defeat.

When these election-losers, in a New Year message, gave voice to pro-European opinions, they were dismissed by Hague and his spokesmen, both political and editorial, as has-beens whose time had come and gone, standing for a view of Europe that the principled mainstream had mercifully displaced. They would have to fall in line, or be expelled beyond the pale.

In adopting this line, however, the leadership is misreading the history of its own side. Perhaps it believes the Heseltine-Clarke faction will change its mind as easily as many sceptics have done themselves. For certainly, Tory scepticism is more deeply rooted with deviancy than the self-glorifying picture of conviction politicians ever convey. While there are honourable sceptics from way back — John Biffen, Teddy Taylor, Nicholas Budgen — there's a much larger army of Tory politicians whose flexibility of opinion is wonderful to behold.

Who is this, in 1972, harrying any sceptic who dared raise a squeak of criticism

when the bill taking Britain into Europe was going through the House? Why, John Wilkinson MP, now one of the phable ultra-s who wrecked the Major Government. What did Bill Cash do when the Single European Act was going through the Commons in 1986? Lecture Enoch Powell on the necessity for majority voting in the interest of creating pan-European industries. What are we to make of Norman Lamont, once a defender of ERM membership with everything a Chancellor could throw at it, now a maker of the case to get out of the European Union? What, for that matter, of La Thatcher, who took Britain further in than anyone since Ted Heath, and now preaches anathemas against the entire European enterprise?

I don't argue that these switches were baseless, or opportunistic. Nor is it the case that politicians should be obliged to stick with every

conviction they have ever held, though when they reverse themselves with such abruptness it can be helpful to other more extensive education than most politicians, including these, are prepared to. But what this record deprives them of is any unique right to the title of conviction politicians: also, I suspect, any adequate understanding that the people on the other side of the argument might have beliefs they will not surrender in any circumstances.

COMMENT AND ANALYSIS 9

The secret party that nearly won the election



David McKie

HERE'S a conventional view of the 1997 election result. Labour, with 43 per cent of the popular vote, smashed the Tories, who took barely over 30 per cent. The result was a huge Labour landslide which swept Tony Blair into power probably a decade. And here is a less conventional analysis. The election showed no great urgency or excitement. Despite its titanic parliamentary majority, Labour attracted fewer than one in three of those entitled to vote. Its share of the total electorate, as opposed to the total vote, was a mere 31 per cent: less than the 33 per cent John Major took when he won by only 21 seats five years earlier.

The conventional analysis misses a lot: the distortion of the electoral system which the boundary commissions failed to rectify before the 1997 election; the effectiveness of tactical voting; and the fact that turnout fell. In 1992, 77.7 per cent of those eligible to vote chose to do so; in 1997 the figure was 71.4 — the lowest for 80 years.

Here's a still less conventional version. Pretend that the stay at home constituted their own political party. It's an unreal calculation, since many couldn't have voted: given the known inadequacy of electoral registration, it's clear that thousands were dead. But at least it may help to offset conventional calculations based only on shares of the vote, which treat those who stay away as if they didn't exist. On this basis, then, the Non Voting Party (NVP) had almost as good an election as Labour. Labour increased its support among those eligible to vote by 4.1 percentage points to 30.9 per cent. The NVP's increase was only a whisker behind — up 4.6 points to 23.9. That put them an easy second to Labour — ahead of the Tories (21.9) and Liberal Democrats (12.1). In inner London, they topped even Labour. Labour won the support of 35 per cent of the total electorate; the NVP had 37 per cent.

AND that can't be simply explained in terms of a swing from the Tories to the apathy ticket. As John Curdick and Michael Stead show in their appendix to the latest Nuffield election study, turnouts fell more heavily in Labour seats than in Tory ones. "Labour's heartlands," they say, "were distinctly apathetic about their party's surge to vic-

tory." Some of that is ascribable to the first-past-the-post electoral system. There's less incentive to get out and vote in somewhere like Barnsley, where Labour success is certain, than there is in somewhere like Battersea, where every vote is needed to turn the Conservatives out.

But there's another possible reason behind this pattern which ought to worry the parties a lot, though I fear it won't. This pattern could well reflect a politics which seems more and more geared to the interests of middle-class Britain, and which offers less and less hope to those who have least. Political exclusion, to go with social exclusion.

That's one aspect of the rise of the NVP which could cause New Labour embarrassment were the all-party inquiry into voting systems ordered by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, empowered to consider it. It seems that it won't be. Its brief is reported to be to look at electoral machinery and procedures and to consider how they might be made more user-friendly. The traditional trek to some local schoolroom to cast one's vote, for instance: does it ask too much of the young? Couldn't there be more polling stations — on the model of mobile libraries, perhaps, or even in supermarkets? Couldn't we be more permissive in allowing for postal votes?

ALL very sensible: but you can't understand falling rates of participation in such narrow mechanical terms. They're as much to do with a change in the culture. Where once people felt that to vote was a duty, just as they tended to vote out of rooted allegiance, we are now in the age of the shop-around vote, where a switch from Tory to Labour is more and more like switching from Sainsbury to Tesco. And if no political superstar offers you what you need, why cross the road to give it your custom?

One other notion down for consideration is a change to electronic voting. That could have the added advantage of making the lost deposit a much more effective deterrent for trouble-makers using dubious political labels and publicity gannets advertising Mongolian restaurants, against whom the present arrangements seem to be powerless.

The Home Office has looked in the past at the possibility of using a sliding scale: the nearer you got to the five per cent of the vote you need to save your deposit, the less money you'd have from the Tories to the apathy ticket. As John Curdick and Michael Stead show in their appendix to the latest Nuffield election study, turnouts fell more heavily in Labour seats than in Tory ones. "Labour's heartlands," they say, "were distinctly apathetic about their party's surge to vic-

A pizza killer's defence

Steven Rose thinks that genetic science may be used to try and explain away the causes of crime and violence

AMAN is homosexual because he has a "gay brain", itself the product of "gay genes", and a woman is depressed because she has genes "for" depression. There is violence on the streets because people have "violent" or "criminal" genes; people get drunk because they have genes "for" alcoholism.

Such simplification, with its cheaply seductive dichotomies of nature or nurture, genes or environment, is fallacious. Adequate explanations must involve both. Social violence and its assumed biological causes, to make the claim stick, neurogenetic determinism has first of all to lump together quite different activities — rape and arson, child beating, pub brawls, strikers versus police on picket lines, civil war.

The US fighter pilot directing a smart missile at a Baghdad bunker is supposed to be showing the same biological propensity as a man beating up his lover.

All are examples of some brain process going on inside "the aggressive individual".

That can be quantified, separated into "genetic" and "environmental" components, and then potentially drugged or engineered away, as if anyone could really believe that genocide in Bosnia could have been prevented by manipulating the serotonin levels in the brains of the Serbian politicians, or that human conflict could be modelled and its biology interpreted by measuring how long it takes a rat to kill a mouse dropped into its cage.

Such determinism may be poor science, but it has profound social consequences. Violence in modern society is no longer to be explained in terms of inner city squalor, unemployment, extremes of wealth and poverty and the loss of the hope that by collective effort we might create a better society. Rather, it is a problem resulting from the presence of individual aggressive persons, with disorders in their biochemical or genetic constitution.

But in a strange way, the blame is simultaneously placed upon them and lifted from them. Thus in a recent US court case the lawyer to a



murderer sentenced to death for the violent slaughter of the manager of a pizza parlour, seeks permission to mount a genetic defence against the sentence, claiming that he may carry a gene which predisposes him to violence. In which case he would not be "responsible" for the murder he committed. "It was not me, it was my genes." Such a defence would not be acceptable under current legal practice in the UK.

However, I suspect that the law will increasingly find itself having to come to terms with the various claims of the neurosciences and genetics.

Similarly, if homosexuality is "in the genes" a gay man should not, in a homophobic society, be regarded as morally culpable, still less guilty of criminal behaviour, for following his genetic dictates. It is not surprising there-

fore that certain sections of the gay and lesbian community have actively welcomed these genetic claims, or that both the Christian fundamentalist right and the judiciary are worried about just how far the determinist argument can be stretched.

The second immediate social consequence of such determinism is that attention and funding is diverted from the social to the molecular. It becomes more productive to study the roots of violent "temperament" in babies and young children than to legislate to remove bandits from society.

Of course there are likely to be differences in the brains and bodies of people who become "alcoholic" or "violent" compared with those who are not, and research exploring these differences can be informative. But violent crime is much higher in the US than in Europe — higher for instance than in Britain, and much higher than in Sweden. Could this be accounted for by some unique feature of American genes? Well, possibly, but pretty unlikely granted that much of the American population originated by migration from Europe.

Also the rates of violent crime change dramatically over quite short time periods. The death rate from homicide amongst young US males increased by 54 per cent between 1985 and 1994.

No biologically-based explanation can account for this increase, so it becomes more helpful to ask instead what has changed in the US over this period? Could one important factor be the estimated 280,000 gun handguns in the personal possession in the US? Unlike genetic ones, such hypotheses may give clues for meaningful intervention.

Professor Steven Rose is a neuroscientist at the Open University and the author of *Lifeless: Biology Beyond Determinism* (Penguin). This is extracted from his lecture last night at the Royal Society of Arts.

I've seen the killing game



Ian Aitken

IDON'T know what Algeria did to Derek Fatchett, the Foreign Office minister who has just conducted a fact-finding mission to that benighted land, but I know what it did to me nearly 40 years ago. It convinced me that killing people even for a good cause is utterly inexcusable.

I can identify the exact moment when that lesson finally sank in. It was in Algeria in 1961. Following an appalling episode in which I had seen 60-year-old white demonstrators mown down by ill-disciplined Arab troops in the French army.

French doctors, mad-

dened with grief, stormed into the journalists' hotel that night and demanded almost at gunpoint that we come to the hospital and witness the horrors there. I went, and will never forget what I saw. Perhaps the worst scene was in the hospital mortuary, where I squeezed down a narrow passage whose sides consisted of naked corpses stacked one upon another right up to the ceiling. True, these people had not been shot in the service of a cause. It was a mistake, almost an accident.

But it was part of a pattern of death in which the daily body count in Algeria alone rarely fell below 40. The random victims of all murders in the service of causes — the liberation of Algeria, or its preservation from a Muslim takeover.

I was there to cover the closing stages of France's seven-year war in defence of its last significant colony. I had arrived with strong sympathies for the rebels. But as the war intensified, and horror was

piled on horror, my sympathy gradually eroded.

By the end of the experience I had become convinced that killers remain killers, even when they kill for what they believe is a good cause.

Too many of them come to enjoy killing, or at least to find it necessary to their self-esteem; others simply become inured to murder.

I squeezed down a narrow passage of naked corpses stacked one on another right up to the ceiling

But in either case, I realised they would all come to accept killing as a legitimate means of settling all political differences, once independence had been achieved.

And that is exactly what happened after France's withdrawal in 1962. Once the initial euphoria was over, the rival liberation groups first began to

imprison each other and then to kill each other.

The end result is the inexplicable slaughter which Mr Fatchett was vainly trying to unravel this week.

Of course, the crimes weren't all committed by the guerrillas.

Fearful atrocities were perpetrated by the French army, which openly adopted torture and assassination as instruments of state policy.

And what brought Algeria's colonial war to its bloody climax was not FLN

terrorists but the backlash against President de Gaulle's decision to pull out.

This backlash was ostensibly staged by the million European settlers — the so-called *Pieds Noirs* — who had largely created the modern Algeria and could fairly claim a stake in its future. But it really came from the army and its semi-

fascist supporters, who created one of history's most sinister terrorist groups — the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* or OAS.

This horrendous group set out to commit atrocities of unimaginable frightfulness against the Arab population in the hope that they would break the official ceasefire and commit similar tit-for-tat atrocities.

Then, the OAS calculated, de Gaulle would be forced to send the Army back in and the war would resume. The real result was to make it impossible for the *Pieds Noirs* to remain in an independent Algeria.

But the OAS's tactics now have a gruesome resonance, as Mo Mowlem struggles to prevent equally deliberate tit-for-tat killings from wrecking the hope of peace in Northern Ireland.

So I have a half-serious suggestion for that splendid lady: why not round up all the Ulster politicians, especially those with terrorist links, and fly them down to Algeria? There they could continue the peace talks — but with a constant reminder on the doorstep of what failure could ultimately mean.

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Zevulun Hammer

Zionism's practical fanatic

THE death at the age of 63 of Zevulun Hammer, Israel's deputy prime minister, minister of religious affairs, and minister for education and culture, deprives the country of a politician who epitomised the "national religious" trend in politics.

After the 1967 war, Hammer gave the nascent settler movement respectability by grafting their cause to the established National Religious Party (NRP). Religious Zionism, once an almost apologetic concern, now gave new zest to the state and

restored pride in the Jewish religion.

But the same trend also indirectly spawned Jewish terrorism in the 1980s and led to the assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 — events which embarrassed and disillusioned Hammer. Meanwhile, Palestinians felt that Hammer's devotion to Kretz Yisrael (the biblical Land of Israel, or the West Bank and Gaza) effectively turned them into aliens on their own soil.

Born to a humble Polish-Jewish family in the northern Palestinian port of Haifa, Hammer studied Judaic Stud-

ies at Bar-Ilan University, and later became a teacher. After serving as a tank commander in the 1967 war, he entered the Knesset two years later and held his seat until his death. Hammer the individual hardly resembled the demonic stereotype of the fanatic, but he believed that Israel's victory in the Six Day War represented the Divine Hand at work and was "the beginning of redemption". In the early 1970s he co-edited the NRP's Young Guard in alliance with the extra-parliamentary messianic Gush Emunim settlers movement. Hammer served as deputy

minister of education, welfare minister, minister of education and of the Knesset foreign affairs and defence committee, from where he endorsed that settlement received government subsidies, even though their legality was questionable.

His career really blossomed in 1977, when the NRP harnessed its fortunes to the new ruling Likud Party, after its hitherto continuous alliance with Labour. Hammer's Greater Israel enthusiasms tallied perfectly with Menachem Begin's own vision. Eventually, in 1987, Hammer ousted the veteran moderate,

Dr Yosef Burg, as party leader.

Yet he never settled in the territories himself. Instead, he lived in the quiet border town of Bnei Brak with his wife, Menachemia, and their four daughters.

Long experience transformed Hammer from *enfant terrible* of the religious right into an elder statesman and perhaps his greatest triumph came after the Rabin assassination. For four years following the Labour triumph of 1992, the NRP was in the political wilderness and as secular Israelis blamed it for "causing" the Rabin murder,

other party leaders snapped back or cowered in fear.

But Hammer unequivocally castigated the murder as an abuse of religion, and even accepted the Oslo II peace accords with the Palestinians as a *fait accompli*. Six months later, the NRP increased its seats to nine and its vote share to 8.5 per cent, and joined the large religious minority in Israeli parliament. Hammer's slogan of "Zionism with a soul" struck a chord with voters, as did his plea for a "united Jerusalem". Most of all, he galvanised religious support for Benjamin Netan-

yahu, thus guaranteeing the latter's victory in the prime ministerial poll.

High hopes were soon tarnished by ugly fighting with his religious rivals in the Shas Party, but after an awkward agreement Hammer acceded to the post of religious affairs minister in August 1997. Despite his cancer, he worked furiously as ever and above all sought to restore "Jewish values" in education while remaining committed to "pluralism".

He equally fiercely resisted Israeli redeployment from Arab Hebron, but nevertheless accepted its ratification.



Hammer... from infant terrible to elder statesman

Hammer the politician knew something that Hammer the religious idealist could never quite admit — politics is just the art of the possible.

Lawrence Jette

Zevulun Hammer, Israeli minister, born 1936; died January 20, 1998



Georgi Vins... freed in exchange for Soviet spies

PHOTOGRAPH: KESTON INSTITUTE

Georgi Vins

Pastor who defied the KGB

ONE Sunday morning in April 1979, two men in dark suits, mounted the steps of the First Baptist Church of Washington DC. A crowd pressed around them, held back by security men. One was Jimmy Carter, President of the United States, but it was the other who most had come to see: Pastor Georgi Vins, leader of the unregistered Baptist Church in the Soviet Union, who has died aged 69.

Three days earlier, just over halfway through a 10-year sentence, Vins had been summoned to Moscow from his exile in Siberia, given a new suit and a case to contain his possessions by the KGB, told that he had been stripped of his Soviet citizenship and bundled on to an aeroplane.

Only there did he meet two American officials who told him he was bound for New York and that he was one of five dissidents on the plane; later still he discovered they were being exchanged for two Soviet spies. That night, looking out from the top of the UN Plaza Hotel over a stupendous vista of Manhattan, he remarked: "Ode Christian is worth less than half a spy."

This exchange was one of the most dramatic events in the human-rights confrontation between the US and the USSR during the Brezhnev years. Now that dissidents were no longer summarily ex-

ecuted, a new breed of men and women, tough both mentally and physically, confronted the KGB and sometimes, after a long period of attrition, won. More and more reliable information about them spread through the world, which gave them moral support.

Vins was the son of a Baptist pastor and saw his father and family constantly harassed during his childhood in Siberia. His father's final arrest was in 1957; he died in the Gulag in 1963.

His son's Christian faith survived the tough school of Soviet indoctrination and his formidable mother, Lidia, remained loyal to her husband's calling. Georgi trained as an electrical engineer in the late 1940s.

Just when better days seemed to have arrived for the Russian Baptists, in 1960 Nikita Khrushchev turned the screw again. He forced the Moscow administration of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists to pass an internal church statute obliging pastors to curb their evangelism, particularly among the young, making them renounce all contact with the proliferating unregistered — and therefore illegal — congregations. The Soviet tactics were to create a compliant leadership, willing to deny all persecution, and squeeze any objectors out of existence.

In the turmoil which followed, the unregistered Baptists confronted the Soviet authorities, demanding their right, under the constitutional provision of the separation of church and state, to run their affairs without interference. In 1968 they unsuccessfully petitioned the Moscow church leadership to back this demand.

As arrest followed arrest, Vins and Gennadi Kryuchkov emerged as leaders. This was a milestone: the first human-rights movement in any com-

munist country, organised, furthermore, on a national scale. As the men were systematically arrested, the women formed the Council of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives, collecting information and smuggling it abroad.

On May 16, 1966 there was another first: Vins and Kryuchkov organised a massive street demonstration outside the Central Committee building in Moscow. Keston College in Oxford compiled a volume entitled *Three Generations of Suffering* in 1976, following a secret

meeting with the Vins family to their Kiev home the previous year.

By this time Vins had directed the unregistered Baptist movement from the underground for five years (1969-1974), eluding the searches of the KGB. He was now serving a second sentence following his arrest, this time for 10 years. Just halfway through came his expulsion to the US.

The very toughness which ensured his survival in the teeth of KGB persecution made it difficult for him to adapt to life in the West. He trusted few people

received an invitation to enter the building to discuss the issues. They emerged only three years later, after brutal treatment — and a prison sentence.

The transparency of his trial, painstakingly compiled by their fellow-believers, became a seminal document in the emergence of the Soviet human rights movement. Through it the names of Vins and Kryuchkov became known in the West and they were supported by an international letter-writing cam-

paign. They documented their sufferings by information secreted out of jail.

During his captivity Vins kept a fragmented prison diary, incorporating his own poems and letters from his family. After his release he appended an account of his aged mother's trial and sentence to three years in 1970. Together with some brief accounts of the lives of earlier Russian Evangelical martyrs, Keston College in Oxford compiled a volume entitled *Three Generations of Suffering* in 1976, following a secret

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Denis Barrington

Bits and pieces down to an art

ART for Denis Barrington, who has died aged 67, was all-embracing. His final exhibition, in Perth, Western Australia, included arrangements of found objects, brightly-painted wood and mixed media constructions, and *Hallo, Hello, Hello*, comprising "computer bits, phone and collage". Together they spoke of an individual imbued with joyful frivolity yet utterly committed to his vision.

As a schoolboy he constructed sea-reliefs from cereal packets. His collection of exotic fruit stickers was just the beginning of his magpie collection of ephemera. In 1944 he entered the Southend College of Art and won commissions while still a student.

Denis then spent 15 years with his family in Southern Rhodesia where his design work included the last set of stamps for Federal Rhodesia, which were approved by the Queen, printed, and then burned, unused, as the country underwent its painful metamorphosis into Zimbabwe. Denis never even owned a set.

He returned to Britain in 1970 and his work was exhibited by the Royal Academy and at shows around the country. As a member of the 9-Group his shows toured to Liechtenstein, Venezuela and Lisbon.

He was also a member of *Artists for Peace*, which exhibited in the precincts of St James's Church in Piccadilly.



Barrington's sculpture... frivolity allied to vision

He was particularly proud of his design for the Humanist Society's badge.

Much of his colourful and idiomatic work is in private collections throughout the world — he attracted particular attention from media and art business people. In 1997 he achieved wide recognition with an exhibition in Washington, yet despite such successes he never lost his touch with basics, continuing for more than 30 years to show his work at the Bayswater Road market.

Even in his long last illness Denis, who had two sons and a daughter, retained his hu-

mour and worked on. The titles he gave to his pieces remained: *wayward*, *Smart*, *Simpatia*, *Zeyn*, *o Filapant*, *Fish*, and *o Sky Cigar*. *Mater*, *Pater* and the *Young* *Cyrtator* and the last piece in his final show, *Drawers*. *Daydream after a heavy lunch of Kippers and Castard*. "I put great store by titles," he said. "They can amuse and be intriguing." Just like Denis Barrington's life.

David Winpenny

Denis Gerald Barrington, artist, born November 2, 1930; died December 1, 1997

Eric Messer

ERIC Messer, who has died aged 88, was for more than 60 years a campaigner for the Labour Party, the trade union movement and for peace.

Born in Tottenham, the son of Sir Frederick Messer, the local Labour MP, in 1929 he founded the local Labour League of Youth. In 1939-40 he helped to establish the Labour Pacifist Fellowship (forerunner of Labour Action for Peace).

Eric campaigned for Labour Party democracy, organising an unofficial "national delegates" conference in 1944. He was a founder member of the Victory for Socialism group, which helped shape Labour's 1945 "Let Us Face The Future" manifesto.

By profession he was an insurance agent and an active member of his trade union, USDAW. He represented his union and his local Labour Party at Labour annual conferences. In his last conference speech, in 1993, he moved the resolution for the ratification of the original Clause Four. He was also active in the Cooperative party.

In 1949 Eric was elected to Croydon Council and in 1972 became an alderman. He stood for Parliament twice — in Essex (1955) and Croydon South (1959). Throughout his life he worked with the peace movement, took his two sons on the first Aldermaston March in 1958, organised a rally for peace in 1980 and was involved in a petition sent to the 1992 UN Special Session.

With Lillian, his wife of 26 years, he worked to promote socialism, peace and disarmament.

Ron Huzzard

Eric (Frederick Alfred) Messer, campaigner, born July 1908; died December 7, 1997

Birthdays

Nigel Benn, boxer, 34; Caroline Dawnay, literary agent, 48; Chris Dunkley, broadcaster, 54; George Foreman, heavyweight boxer, 50; Judge Ann Goddard QC, 63; John Hurt, actor, 58; Piper Laurie, actress, 66; Sir Alf Ramsey, former football manager, 78; Claire Rayner, agony aunt, 67; Ann Southern, actress, 88; Francis Wheen, biographer and journalist, 41.

سبحان من لا يموت

Analysis Numeracy

Critics of David Blunkett's initiative on teaching numeracy say that he is marching backwards into the 19th century. But, **John Carvel** argues, the ability to do mental arithmetic empowers the citizen

Two and two does make four

There is a school of thought which holds that mathematics doesn't matter any more in people's everyday lives and that the Government was taking a wrong turning yesterday by launching a numeracy drive which will take up an increasing share of the timetable in primary schools. Not many of us use geometry in adult life, and most have access to the calculators and computers which may make it less important that we have 100 per cent accuracy in the skills of long division. Shop assistants who used to need mental arithmetic to work out the bills can now rely on scanners linked to sophisticated information technology. In which most customers seem happy to place their trust.

Failure to read and write competently was a severe impediment to work and leisure in the 20th century and it is likely to become an even greater handicap in the 21st as fewer and fewer people are employed in manual tasks and more are required to embark on a lifetime of perpetual re-skilling. But is it really necessary for more than a tiny specialist percentage of this flexible workforce to bother itself with the cultural inheritance of Pythagoras? There is no doubt an argument to be had about the relative importance of literacy and numeracy, but no evidence to suggest that schools cannot manage to teach both, or that arithmetic is in any way outmoded.

Last year the Basic Skills Agency published the results of research into the impact of poor numeracy (1). It tested a group of 37-year-olds born in a single week in 1958 whose progress has been consistently charted as part of the national child development study. Just over 25 per cent of them had very low numeracy skills which would make it difficult to complete everyday tasks successfully. The deficiency had "a

significant impact on their lives" — which could not be outweighed by competence in literacy. As the Government's numeracy task force pointed out in its report yesterday: "People find life much easier if they can answer basic numerical questions, eg 'What is the discount worth if it is 10 per cent of £24.95?' 'How much are 50 stamps at 26p each?' A good grasp of numeracy is also needed to manage personal financial affairs. This is increasingly important as more and more people assume responsibility for long-term financial obligations such as hire purchase, mortgages, student loans and pensions."

So part of the case for the Government's numeracy crusade is the need to empower individuals — to cope with their personal lives and as citizens, able to interpret statements in the news about changing unemployment figures or interest rates, and handle data in graphs or tables such as weather charts or illustrations of insurance benefits.

Another part relates to the national economic interest. In another survey last year, the Basic Skills Agency compared numeracy skills in Britain, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Japan, Australia and Denmark. Just under 6,000 people were asked to complete 13 elementary arithmetical tasks. While 43 per cent of the Japanese got all the answers right, only 30 per cent did so in Britain. And at the bottom end of the ability band, 23 per cent of the British sample could not answer more than five questions, compared with only 4 per cent in the Netherlands.

The Government is concerned that this relative lack of mental agility may become a national economic handicap as firms relocate in a global economy in search of the most skilled labour. Ministers' anxiety was confirmed by evidence from the Third International

Mathematics and Science Survey (3) showing that Britain's 9-10 year olds were among the lowest performers in nine countries with similar social and cultural backgrounds. There is a need to educate all children in elementary maths to provide the grounding for the higher order skills needed by those who will go on to become the next generation of engineers, scientists, economists, business people, teachers and computer specialists. But ministers think the basic numeracy training is an economic requirement for the whole workforce and not just a weeding out process to identify the specialists.

Within a fortnight of the election they were setting themselves a hugely ambitious target for increasing the proportion of 11-year-olds reaching the level of numeracy which the experts deem appropriate for their age. In 1996, only 55 per cent came up to this standard. David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, stated his political reputation on raising that to 75 per cent by 2002 (4).

Mr Blunkett's advisers carried out a lot of research while Labour was in opposition on a programme to improve basic skills of reading and writing in primary schools. So his decision to set a literacy target to get 80 per cent of 11-year-olds up to the expected standard by 2002 was grounded in intellectual rigour. The justification for the maths target did not emerge until yesterday with publication of a preliminary report of the numeracy task force.

Learning by numbers

Numeracy is improving in our schools, but we could all do better. The government has set an ambitious new target for 2002.

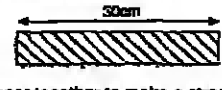
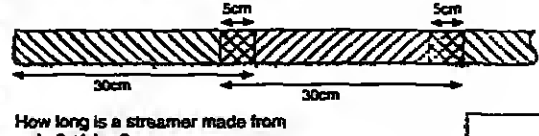
Can you do these?

These twelve questions were given to an international sample of adults. Only 20 per cent in the UK got all twelve correct compared to 43 per cent in Japan.

- Subtract 1.78 from 5
- Take away 2.43 from 5
- Add together 5.5, 7.25 and 3.75
- The total of 4.25, 6 and 7.74
- Multiply 6 x 21
- Multiply 16 x 21
- Area of a room 11m x 18m
- Number of apples each person gets if a box of 72 is shared by six people
- Work out 15% of 700
- Number of children in a crowd of 7,900 if the proportion is 10%
- What is 5/6 of 300?
- Number of books not in the sale if a third are in the sale and the total number of books is 420

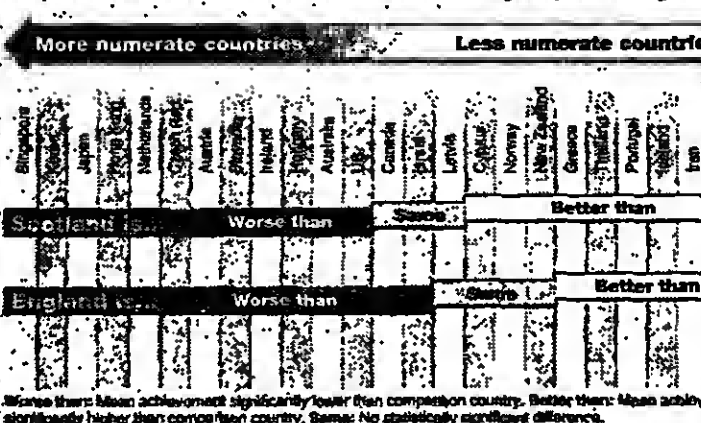
Can your children do these?

These questions are from test papers aimed at Levels 3-5, Key Stage 2 (11-year-olds).

- What is the cost of four video tapes at two pounds ninety-nine pence each? £
- One eighth of a number is two point five. What is the number?
- Strips of paper are each 30 centimetres long. 
- Steve joins strips of paper together to make a streamer. The strips overlap each other by 5cm. 
- How long is a streamer made from only 2 strips?
- Surita makes a streamer that is 250cm long. How many strips does she use?

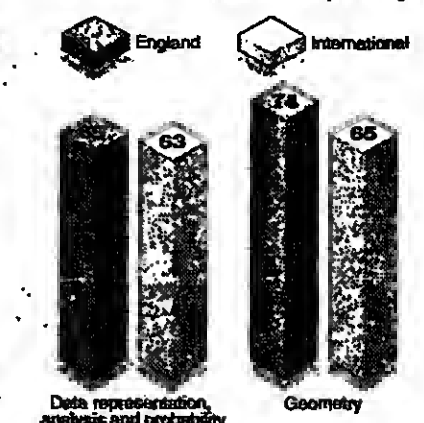
How we compare: worse with numbers...

Comparison of mathematics achievement, international fourth grade (Year 5 in England)



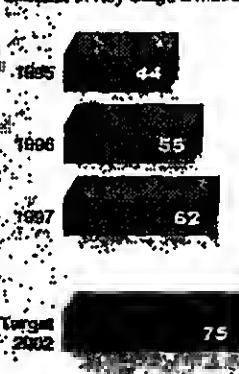
...but better at problem solving

Overview of mean percentages



Getting there...

Percentage of 11-year-olds achieving level 4



Setting targets

The government aims to have 75 per cent of 11-year-olds achieving the standard in mathematics expected for their age by 2002. The National Numeracy Project states, among other things, that numerate pupils should:

- Have a sense of the size of a number and where it fits into the number system
- Know by heart number facts such as number bonds, multiplication tables, doubles and halves
- Calculate accurately, both mentally and with pencil and paper, drawing on a range of calculation strategies
- Recognise when it is not appropriate to use a calculator

Answers Adults:
3.22, 2.57, 18.5, 17.98,
126, 336, 198m,
12, 105, 780,
250, 280
Children:
11.00, 20,
55cm, 11

under David Reynolds, professor of education at Newcastle University.

He said it was "a watershed for the mathematics community" in that it produced agreement among rival camps of experts about a range of techniques to improve the teaching of numeracy in schools.

Ministers were describing the report as a return to basics, but this gave a misleading impression that the new techniques hark back to a Victorian era when pupils spent their time chanting tables. There is no evidence that these old methods benefited slow learners. Prof Reynolds is recommending a daily maths lesson for every primary class, lasting 45-60 minutes and ideally in the morning.

The teachers will be trained to give students time to think or discuss their answers in pairs before answering. They will be encouraged to ask open questions, inviting pupils to explain their reasoning rather than find a single correct answer.

These methods were piloted in a national numeracy project pioneered by Mr Blunkett's predecessor, Gillian Shephard. There must always be some concern that pilot projects overstate the benefits of change because they tend to attract enthusiasts who could achieve better results whatever the method. But Prof Reynolds is confident that results of using the proposed techniques are so impressive that they can improve performance everywhere.

The task force has noted better results in countries such as Hungary and Switzerland which concentrate on mental arithmetic for the first few years of primary school, delaying written methods of calculation until pupils are eight or nine.

Now still rages among the Government's maths advisers about the extent of a ban on calculators in the primary classroom. They will almost certainly be removed from children under eight, but experts and ministers have not yet agreed how to phase them into use in the later years.

There will be a massive re-skilling programme for primary teachers who will all get five or six days retraining in the new literacy and numeracy methods over the next three years. Regional, local and school co-ordinators will supplement this with regular monitoring and support.

But doubts remained last night about the resources available for this. Mr Blunkett said the school standards fund would increase as part of the Government's comprehensive spending review, but he does not yet know by how much. Without that injection it is not yet clear that the numeracy initiative adds up.

Sources: (1) J. Brynner and S. Parsons, Does Numeracy Matter? Basic Skills Agency, January 1997; (2) Numeracy Matters, the preliminary report of the Numeracy Task Force, Department for Education and Employment, January 1998; (3) Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), second national report, part 1, National Foundation for Educational Research, 1997; (4) DfEE announcement, 13 May 1997. Graphics sources: DfEE, NFER, Basic Skills Agency, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Graphics: Paddy Allen, Finbar Sheehy, David Turner. Researcher: Mark Explner. John Carvel is the Guardian's Education Editor.

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FinanceGuardian

Cricket lord is mobile captain

LORD MacLaurin, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, is to become chairman of Vodafone, the mobile phone company that sponsors the England cricket team.

The former Tesco chairman, who is also a non-executive director of Whitbread, will take over from Sir Ernie Harrison after the annual meeting in July.

Sir Ernie, 71, who was one of Mrs Thatcher's favourite businessmen, oversaw the creation of the mobile phone business within Racal. He built up Racal, over 30 years, into a telecoms and defence electronics conglomerate, winning one of the first mobile phone licences in 1982.

Vodafone was floated in 1991 in one of Britain's first demergers, when it began to outgrow its shrinking parent. Vodafone is now valued at £15 billion, 20 times the value of Racal.

Mike Atherton, the England captain, pictured right, set the tone yesterday with a pitch-side call.



Retailers under pressure as 'new age' consumer keeps purse closed

Economy slowing sharply

Charlotte Denny and David Gow

SIGNS that the economy may be heading for a sharp slowdown emerged yesterday as official figures confirmed that retailers suffered a gloomy Christmas. Engineering firms also warned of job cuts ahead.

Retail sales dropped by 0.1 per cent in December, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics yesterday. Computer and photographic firms had a particularly bad Christmas, as consumers held out for the sales.

David Bloom of James Capel said the "new age" consumer had arrived. "The new age consumer waits until the January sales to purchase certain items and does not purchase them at inflated Christmas prices."

The annual rate of growth in sales volumes picked up to 5.3 per cent last month, from 4.7 per cent in November, but remains well below the highs of last summer.

Fears of a manufacturing

recession grew as figures from the Engineering Employers' Federation showed that the soaring pound, weak demand at home and fierce overseas competition are forcing engineering firms to lay off staff and bring in short-time workers.

The Federation said that, with the pound close to 3 German marks and the prospect of a flood of cheap imports

from stricken Asian economies, UK companies faced a sharp decline in export orders and rising unemployment.

Alan Armitage, EEF head of economics, presenting the latest quarterly business trends survey of 1,670 firms, said: "Numbers of our members are contemplating having to curtail their activities through short-time working and redundancies. Some of

these measures have already been taken."

He said the economy could be in reverse by the second half of this year. "There's going to be a slackening in industry, there's no doubt about that. The issue is how deep and how long. I'm not saying a recession but there are clear weaknesses in demand on the export and domestic fronts."

The pound fell slightly

against the mark on the news of the drop in December sales. The markets will be watching tomorrow's first estimate of the pace of economic growth in the final quarter last year for an indication of whether the Bank of England will raise rates next month.

Despite a disappointing Christmas, 1997 was a bumper year for retailers according to the ONS. Sales vol-

umes rose 5.4 per cent compared with 1996, the highest increase since the 6.4 per cent posted in 1988.

"Strong sales in 1997 are the result of low prices not the precursor to higher inflation," said Simon Briscoe of Nikko Bank. "Inflation has been

weakest in areas which have seen the strongest sales... Consumers are winning the tactical battle. A good part of the windfalls was spent but it cut retailers' margins rather than raising inflation."

Consumers spent £178 billion last year, driving economic growth above the rate the Bank's monetary policy committee considers is compatible with low inflation. But signs emerged yesterday that the underlying pace of growth is slackening. The ONS said the three-month adjusted growth rate, had dropped from 1.4 per cent in September to 0.8 per cent last month.

Mr Brown is determined to use his package — the third since Labour came to power in May last year — to improve work incentives and make jobs pay better for those on low incomes. Changes to the benefit system and reform of National Insurance are also being considered by the Treasury.

But tax experts at the IFS were lukewarm about the two main measures favoured by Mr Brown. They argued that the 10 pence starting rate was "not well

Green budget promises tax cuts to help poor

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown will use his Budget in March to bring help to the working poor through a new family tax credit and a 10 pence starting rate of tax, according to a report released yesterday, writes Larry Elliott.

The Green Budget — prepared jointly by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and City firm Goldman Sachs — predicted that the improvement in public finances gave the Government the scope to re-jig the tax system.

targeted on those on low incomes and will add significantly to the complexity of the system." They added that it was also clear that the Chancellor was set on introducing a working families tax credit, based on the system in the United States, where households on low incomes receive financial support through tax cuts rather than benefit increases.

However, the IFS said: "Large-scale reform seems less likely than a re-badging of family credit (the ex-

isting benefit) as a tax credit, alongside the injection of additional funds."

The IFS has long argued that those on low incomes would be better served by increasing tax allowances. It said that if the Government wanted to improve work incentives for the low-paid it would be better advised to change the benefit system than introduce a 10 pence tax band, which would prove expensive unless it covered only a small slice of income.

awarded at about £3.25 each. Mr Longhurst had already built a reputation as the first of the "building society fat cats" and his salary totalled nearly £355,000 at the time of the deal. Lloyds awarded him share options worth four times his remuneration.

Shares in Lloyds TSB have now climbed to 27.58, giving him a profit of about £4.70 a share. In addition, Mr Longhurst is expected to be given a pay off worth roughly £150,000 — a half year's salary and in line with his contract. Insiders admitted that the

windfall profit for Mr Longhurst — the first building society boss to provide his investors with substantial one-off pay outs on conversion — was sizeable, given that he has been at the bank for only three years.

But supporters said this should be seen as the culmination of a 30-year career in the building society movement. They predicted, however, that Mr Longhurst, who is 59 on his next birthday, was unlikely to retire despite his riches. "He is not ready for the golf course yet," said one.

Oxford don will head fight against cartels

David Gow

AN OXFORD economics don, Derek Morris, is to be the first chairman of the Competition Commission, the body planned by the Government to enforce new rules against cartels and predatory pricing by bigger firms against smaller rivals.

Dr Morris, now a deputy chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, was yesterday picked by Margaret Beckett, the trade and industry secretary, to be the MMC's new chairman and to head the successor body when it is set up under new competition laws towards the end of next year.



Mrs Beckett is understood to have interviewed three of the four shortlisted candidates for the post, including business leaders found by City analysts.

Dr Morris replaces Sir Graeme Odgers who resigned in August, 15 months before the end of his £20,000-a-year two-year contract, when Mrs Beckett unveiled her plans to beef up the commission under the Competition Bill. The bill, now going through the Lords, is due to reach the Commons after Easter.

Dr Morris, a former chairman of Oxford Economic Forecasting, and economic director at the National Economic Development Office in the early 1980s, will get the same level of salary as Sir Graeme at the start of his four-year stint.

He will work full-time at the MMC from September 1 after an initial spell on four-day week.

The new commission will have greater authority to prohibit market abuse by firms, and will act as an appeal body for companies hit by the new powers given under the bill to the independent Office of Fair Trading, which will be allowed to enter a firm's premises with a magistrate's warrant and seize documents, and fine a company up to 10 per cent of its turnover if it is found to be abusing its market position.

Ex-building society chief set for £2m windfall from Lloyds TSB

Lisa Buckingham

ANDEW Longhurst, the former building society chief who lost out in the power struggle for the top job at Lloyds TSB, looks likely to walk away from the bank with a profit of more than £2 million.

The surplus on his share options will make him the biggest windfall gainer to emerge from the transfer of building societies from the mutual to the private sector.

It is understood that the Lloyds TSB annual report, to be published soon, will reveal that these options were

awarded at about £3.25 each. Mr Longhurst had already built a reputation as the first of the "building society fat cats" and his salary totalled nearly £355,000 at the time of the deal. Lloyds awarded him share options worth four times his remuneration.

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Brewer fails to fight off beer tax

Chancellor upheld in battle over EU rules, Lisa Buckingham reports

BITAIN'S brewers were thwarted yesterday as the Chancellor's right to continue raising duty on beer.

The court refused the company leave to appeal after finding that it on a pint of beer did not infringe anything laid down in the Treaty of Rome.

Shepherd Neame, a small brewer in Kent, had challenged Gordon Brown's tax increase on the basis that it undermined the British obligation to work towards the harmonisation of duties throughout the European Union.

But the High Court ruled that the Government had

not fallen foul of any European rules, and upheld the Chancellor's right to continue raising duty on beer. The court refused the company leave to appeal after finding that it on a pint of beer did not infringe anything laid down in the Treaty of Rome.

Behind the legal action — which was funded by a number of brewing companies — was the knowledge that more than 1.3 million pints of beer are imported daily from the Continent, where the rate of duty is substantially lower than that in the UK.

Brewers have been pressing the Government to peg tax increases so as to slow the growth in cross-border sales.

Chap imports from the Continent are exacerbating a consumer trend for "take-aways" rather than drinking in pubs. Take-aways are thought to represent 5 per cent of total beer consumption.

Shepherd Neame's challenge to the Government's right to raise taxes was seen by other industries, such as the cigarette manufacturers, as a potential Trojan horse which could help level the rates of duty throughout Europe.

The brewer said the court decision came as "a disappointment" though it had not been entirely unexpected.

Dawn Primarolo, the financial secretary to the Treasury, said: "The decision upholds the important principle that parliament can legitimately set excise duties in the UK subject to minimum rates agreed with our European partners."

Notebook

Can this man do the business?



Edited by Alex Brummer

FEW governments have put more faith in the wisdom of business people to sort out their most ticklish problems than that of Tony Blair. It is thus somewhat aberrant that faced with a shortlist of four people for the post of chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission — soon to be replaced by a new Competition Commission — trade secretary Margaret Beckett chose an academic rather than someone with hard-nosed business experience.

The choice of Dr Derek Morris, the current deputy chairman, will make for continuity at a time of radical change in competition policy. Nevertheless, his experience as an economist, forecaster and expert on Chinese enterprise does not make him the most obvious person to head a more activist Competition Commission, which will be inheriting the MMC's old role, as well as acting as a court of appeal against companies rejecting decisions of the Office of Fair Trading and the utility regulators.

One complaint about the present competition apparatus — which will admittedly be beefed up as a result of Mrs Beckett's reforms — is that the tendency of the OFT to make deals, so as to wave mergers through, has operated to the disadvantage of the consumer, because of the superior negotiating skills of top business.

Indeed, one of the reasons why Gordon Brown and Tony Blair have such a high regard for Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson — despite his offshore trust — is that he is able to take on business interests on their own terms, whether the remit be the public finance initiative or the future of the coal industry.

Among those to take advantage of the OFT's apparent timidity with business was Gerry Robinson of Granada after his company's winning hostile bid for Forte in 1996. The Granada chief, now at the Arts Council, effectively negotiated a long transfer period for disposal of duplicated motorway services stations, which for more than a year gave his company the income from most of the service stations from the Channel ports to Manchester.

The post-Competition Act OFT will have draconian new powers which will allow its director-general, John Bridgeman, sweeping authority to prevent abuse of a dominant position in the market, including unfair purchase and selling prices — the predatory pricing practices used by, among others, News International titles.

But the real test is whether the OFT chief and his promotion colleague at the Competition Commission, Dr Mor-

ris, will have the zeal to go after business people as powerful as Rupert Murdoch.

Brown cache

GORDON Brown has a problem. As problems of Chancellors go it is not an especially big one, but it is a problem all the same.

This Parliament, the public finances are set fair to be in the best state than at any time since the 1960s. If money is not yet overflowing in the Treasury coffers then it will be before long.

Nor is this just a flash in the pan as it was during the Lawson boom. The iron control of public spending since 1993, together with rising taxes, mean that Labour is on course for a Budget surplus from 1999 onwards, even when adjusted for the suite of the economic cycle.

As David Walton, of the US investment bank Goldman Sachs, said when presenting the Green Budget in conjunction with the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Chancellor could quite easily inject £2 billion in the Budget and still meet all his tough fiscal rules.

But the economic case for increasing spending or cutting taxes by £3 billion is less obvious, unless the news of a drop in retail sales in the run-up to Christmas was a true indication of looming recession and not just a problem with seasonal adjustment.

The Treasury wants growth to slow this year so inflation can be held in check. Mr Walton thinks a neutral stance is likely in March, and he's probably right.

But the Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman, Malcolm Bruce, has rightly pointed out that Mr Brown's cautious approach contains its own risks. Building up a war chest to permit fiscal easing later in the year is all very well politically, but it's a bit run for a Chancellor trying to rid Britain of the boom-bust economy to be countenancing bust-boom for the public finances.

Smoothing the fiscal cycle by spending a little more now would not only help ease acute cash shortages to health and education. It would make economic sense as well.

Portman pointer

THE reporting season for the financial services sector got quietly underway yesterday when one of the committed mutuals, the Portman Building Society, reported a 19.9 per cent rise in profits to £41.1 million for 1997, supported by a healthy housing market and an improved cost-income ratio.

The Portman performance offers two lessons. First, building societies do not have to be quoted banks to perform well in a crowded market. Secondly, that those financial institutions which stuck with what they know best, like consumer banking and mortgages, are likely to have done better in 1997 than those engaged in grandiose investment banking and Asian schemes.

Profit train to grind to a halt

Keith Harper

Transport Editor

TRAIN leasing companies are to be scrutinised by the rail regulator, John Swift, in an effort to stop market power being used to make "huge profits" for individuals, John Prescott, said yesterday.

The deputy prime minister's announcement, at the Commons transport select committee, has arisen out of concern about the three rolling-stock companies sold off during rail privatisation for £1.6 billion. After privatisation the companies were sold again, making their original owners multi-millionaires.

The Government has frequently said those companies

should be placed under regulatory control.

Mr Prescott told the committee: "I am determined that they will not misuse their position to get rich again at the taxpayers' expense." He said many critics had objected to the way the companies were sold — at a knockdown price, leaving a few individuals with huge profits.

It is almost certain that Mr Swift, who should complete his inquiry by April, will recommend regulatory control, but that would require new legislation.

Mr Prescott said: "We have every right to demand the best and be absolutely sure that the public gets value for money from an industry which receives almost £2 billion of subsidy."

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.385	France 9.72	Italy 2.081	Singapore 2.82
Austria 20.47	Germany 2.970	Malta 0.83	South Africa 7.48
Belgium 59.91	Greece 459.92	Netherlands 3.281	Spain 245.05
Canada 2.29	Hong Kong 12.26	New Zealand 2.72	Sweden 12.90
Cyprus 0.85	India 52.52	Norway 12.01	Switzerland 2.30
Denmark 11.15	Ireland 1.1545	Portugal 207.45	Turkey 330.150
Finland 5.88	Israel 5.08	Saudi Arabia 6.01	USA 1.5940

Supplied by NatWest Bank (including Indian rupee and Israeli shekel)

مكتبة دار الفجر

Football

Crunch day on FA bung charges

Martin Thorpe

THE FA will announce today whether it is to charge, if anybody, in connection with the "bung" inquiry. Its long-awaited verdict comes more than four years after the probe was commissioned by the Premier League who made public the resulting report's recommendations last year.

So far only George Graham has been punished over the affair, incurring a one-year ban from the game for receiving irregular payments in connection with the transfer of two players while he was manager of Arsenal.

It is unclear what sanctions the FA could announce, however. Many of the central characters, such as Brian Clough, the former Nottingham Forest manager, and his former assistant Ronnie Fenton, are no longer connected with the game and are outside the jurisdiction of the FA.

Another central figure, Frank McLintock, has also severed his links with football after giving up his stake in the agency he helped run.

Even Terry Venables is technically no longer under the jurisdiction of the FA, having recently resigned as chairman of Portsmouth. The governing body could, however, impose a ban on any of these men returning to the game for a defined period.

After all the years and the money spent on this issue it would be surprising if the FA took no action, especially as it recently indicated that it would be firm on this matter if the evidence was there.

England's goalkeeper David Seaman has chipped a bone in his finger and will be out of

action for three weeks. Seaman sustained the injury during Arsenal's controversial 2-2 draw at Coventry last Saturday.

He will miss Saturday's FA Cup fourth-round trip to Middlesbrough and must be ruled doubtful for England's friendly against Chile at Wembley on February 11.

England, meanwhile, are set to complete their preparations for the World Cup finals with matches against Belgium and Morocco in Rabel's King Hassan II tournament in May. England are due to launch the tournament against Morocco on May 27. They are scheduled to meet Belgium two days later.

Tottenham have promised to pick up the bill for the medical which Everton's defender Andy Hinchcliffe failed earlier this month after it was mistakenly sent to the England International.

Hinchcliffe received the £500 bill at his home and Everton's manager Howard Kendall, who had originally

likened the failed transfer negotiations to a "Brian Rix call", said: "This is as comical as a fart in a windmill."

"We are treating the whole thing as a bit of a joke."

A Spurs spokesman said: "The invoice never actually reached Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. The London Independent Hospital, without reference to us, mistakenly sent the invoice for Andy Hinchcliffe's medical costs to the player's home address."

The Leeds defender Richard Johnson has joined the Second Division Southend club on a month's loan. The 34-year-old has not played a first-team game for Leeds since damaging knee ligaments in October, 1996.

FA Cup profile



Band leader... as City descended from disaster to black comedy, Rosler has been top scorer in each of his three seasons

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS THOMSON

Rosler strikes up a rhythm

Roy Collins meets the striker City hope will dispose of West Ham on Saturday

WE ROSLER'S father, a man of clearly impeccable taste, named his son after Germany's inspirational striker and captain Uwe Seeler. With the usual ingratitude of youth, young Rosler grew up wondering why his dad had not considered naming him Kevin Keegan.

Though he is also an admirer of fellow German players Rudi Voller and Jürgen Klinsmann, the most inspirational heroes are always those far removed from one's own lifestyle and whom you are absolutely certain you will never meet.

As a boy growing up in Communist East Germany, there was no more chance of Rosler being allowed to travel over the border to see Keegan in his Hamburg days than when he was leader of the Toot Army. "Then," says Rosler, "the Wall came down and I found myself playing for Manchester City against Keegan's Newcastle. I have to say that was unbelievable for me. Coming to Manchester itself was an amazing thing."

When he arrived from Dynamo Dresden in February, 1994, it was as a temporary replacement for Niall Quinn, who had suffered a knee injury, leaving City short of a big striker for the remainder of their perennial fight against relegation.

After five goals in 12 games, City and Rosler quickly liked each other and he signed for £350,000. During the stormy four years since, Rosler has kept his balance and rhythm as majestically as the band leader on the deck of the sinking Titanic. As City have descended through disaster to farce and black comedy, he has been top scorer in each of his three full seasons.

He has played only seven

times this season after damaging ankle ligaments in a closed-door match against out-of-control Italian players — pure City, many will say — though he will be his team's main hope of causing an upset by scoring in Saturday's fourth-round tie against those fringe travellers West Ham.

He says: "Nothing is ever certain but at the moment it looks as though I will be going. Always, I accepted the terms Manchester City offered me but I am not 24 anymore, I am 29. And maybe

the greatest compliment I can pay the club. The manager Brian Horton was great to me and I was always invited out by people."

Rosler has clearly taken to capitalism as quickly as he took to English football and the language, having arrived speaking not a word of it and knowing only that Manchester had two big clubs. One presumes his agent knew which one he was joining.

He swiftly learned English at night school when he realised that every word taught to him by his seemingly helpful team-mates was a swear word. Yet he felt that even the practical jokes carried a warmth about them.

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Not a lone striker... 'I can honestly say I never felt lonely'

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